MEN AND WOMEN OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

PHILIP GIBBS

Geo. S. Hornblower

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Father

from

Dorothy Randall Hornblower

and Geo. Sanford Hornblower

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OF
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

HONORÉ GABRIEL RIQUETT MIRABEAU

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BY

PHILIP GIBBS

AUTHOR OF

'FOUNDERS OF THE EMPIRE' 'THE ROMANCE OF EMPIRE' ETC.

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PREFACE

THERE are some people, perhaps, who may be annoyed at the appearance of one more book dealing with the French Revolution. If so I am sorry, and they need not read this one. I confess I did not write it to please anybody but myself, and certainly to myself the writing of it has been a real pleasure. During my reading of contemporary memoirs and biographies, from which the facts in this book have been mostly gleaned, I have lived, as it were, in the very tumult of the Revolution, and my imagination has been thrilled by its tremendous drama. It has seemed to me, at times when the pages of my manuscript were blank before me, as if I were describing people and scenes observed by my own eyes; as if I had listened with my own ears to the wit and wisdom of the philosophers who heralded the Revolution, had laughed at the salted epigrams of Madame du Deffand, and carried away fragrant memories from the salon of Madame Geoffrin. Contemporary memoirs have this value over other histories, that they tell one the small details of character and fact; and by a hundred little touches, taken from this memoir or that, one's imagination is able to build up a living image. So I have lived also for a time in the old

Court at Versailles and heard the girlish laughter of Marie Antoinette, before she had learnt not to laugh, and afterwards I have seen the proud sorrow of her face. With Gouverneur Morris I have visited the boudoirs of many charming ladies, with the Prince de Ligne I have had the *entrée* of many noble salons. With Madame Roland I have listened to the pedantry of her elderly husband, to the fine phrases of Brissot and Vergniaud, to the fiery speech of Barbaroux, to the cold classicism of Condorcet, to all the Girondins who came to the Home Secretary's house for the society of his strong-minded wife. I have heard the call to arms of Camille Desmoulins, and he has taken me to the little room which held all his happiness with Lucile and the baby. Marat has invited me into his cellar and read out the latest number of his 'People's Friend.' The thunderous eloquence of Mirabeau has sounded in my ears, and I have leaned on the arm of Danton as he went with a fiery speech in his heart to the Club of the Cordeliers. I have been fascinated, and sometimes bored, by the long harangues of Robespierre, and sat opposite to him in his room above the carpenter's shop where he dreamed of universal liberty through the mists of terror. I have haunted low taverns and heard fierce speeches of feverish women and frenzied men. I have followed the tumbrils to the Place de Grève and seen men and women die a horrid death calmly to the noise of obscene cries. Through all the long drama of the Revolution I have wandered with excited mind, as all have wandered whose imagination has been seized by the most astonishing period of modern history.

I believe it is a period of inexhaustible interest, and

because I have written about it with a large amount of personal pleasure for the mere sake of living more closely with the time, I fancy there are many people who may also find a little pleasure in reading what I have written.

This is not a history. It is rather, perhaps, a psychological study of some of the actors in the great drama, so arranged, however, that the thread of narrative is not confused or lost. For each phase of the Revolution is represented by a set of characters, many of whom are divided from those preceding and following them, by natural death, or the quick knife of the guillotine. My arrangement, therefore, into biographical classes is both convenient and historical.

So much for the text of this book. However worthy or worthless, I confess gladly that it does not compare in interest with the illustrations. They are the excuse and the value of the volume. These contemporary French prints, mostly reproduced for the first time in this country, are surpassingly interesting, and to Mr. Joseph Grego, who, for the purpose of this book, so kindly lent the originals from his wonderful collection, of which those now published form but a small part, my warmest thanks are here recorded.

PHILIP GIBBS.

April, 1906.

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MEN AND WOMEN

OF

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

CHAPTER I

THE COURT AT VERSAILLES

It is a dull place now, the palace of Versailles, where once the splendour of a great Court and the pomp and pageantry of royal etiquette filled the courtyards and the corridors, the gilded salons and the painted bedchambers, with all those great and little people who seemed to rule the destinies of France. American and English tourists, and the *bourgeoisie* of provincial France, now troop in gangs through apartments once sacred to the royal presence, gossip loudly in little rooms where State secrets were once whispered, and pass in the sober black garb of modernity down the panelled passages which were once thronged with the silks and satins, the gold-laced coats, and Pompadour gowns of a world long dead. To most of us who have visited Versailles the rambling old building of sham Italian architecture, drab without and tarnished within, magnificent, perhaps, but not impressive, it is difficult to summon up the spirit of the place, and to realise with any vividness all the strange secrets and the pitiful

tales these walls might tell if their history were inscribed on them. One wanders through, curious and interested, but not moved to any deep emotion. There are paintings to be admired, furniture of exquisite design, tapestry faded though still beautiful. But all this leaves one cold. It is a museum of antiquities, a burial-place of dead things, and the imagination is not quickened with any sense of tragedy, nor with that nervous thrill of painful sympathy with the dead past which sometimes makes one feel the near presence of ghosts.

It is only afterwards, as one leaves Versailles, getting away from the tourist crowd, and forgetting the cockney criticisms, the nasal Americanisms, and the light chatter of Parisian and provincial French, that suddenly there comes to one a host of dim memories, and before one's eyes there rises a panorama of historic scenes and figures.

Ghosts! Vaguely their faces loom up through the mists of memory. The voices of the dead sound faintly in one's ears, with words that have been written in history. Pictures blurred and indistinct, crowded with portraits still with a little life in them, come to one's mental vision; and scenes of pretty gaiety, of stupid vice, of horrid tragedy are re-enacted in the theatre of the brain.

Louis XV. is there, handsome and stately, with a fine dignity of mien inherited from men who, with all his vice perhaps, must have had something of virtue in them, which he had not. Yes, it is Louis the Well-beloved who moves past us in imagination, and from those ill-arranged, ill-assorted memories which are all that most of us can summon up from studies in history, some of his sayings, curiously witty for a king, and with the salt of a cynical philosophy, echo in our ears down the far-off years.

'What have I done that my people love me so much?'

He was amused at the adulation of the people who praised

God for his recovery from sickness. They called him 'Le Bien-Aimé,' and he could not for the life of him tell why! But he could read the signs of the times. He, more clearly perhaps than the philosophers who prophesied the future, knew that those who followed him would have to pay the price of their predecessor's villainies. 'After me,' he said, in a moment of candour, 'after me—the Deluge!' It is not a pleasant ghost, that of Louis the Well-beloved. The gorge rises at this kingly satyr who preyed upon fair and frail women, who spent millions on his mistresses while people starved, clothing his corruption in glittering splendour. We see him with his infamous pander, the Comte du Barry, the tradesman in women's souls, who served his master with Satan's fidelity to sin, and when he tired of one weak woman brought him another, fresh and beautiful, perhaps, in girlish innocence, trembling and terror-stricken in those gilded chambers to which she had been enticed, ignorant, yet fearful of the fate in store for her.

Louis the Well-beloved! Festering and malodorous mass of vice, once crowned king of men, the ghosts of all those women whose virtue he robbed, or bought with money stolen from starving creatures, rise up with horrible accusing faces, and stretch out their arms to pluck at his dead heart.

The condemnation of history is more severe for Louis XV. than the condemnation of an enraged people which brought his grandson to the block. Always will his memory be surrounded with the evil women who were as much his tyrants as his slaves. For them we may have pity and even a little admiration. He was a king, marked out among men to be a leader, yet it was the women who led and ruled, not he who had bought the thing he thought was love. In such a woman as Madame de Pompadour, vile though she was, there was a certain greatness of character. She was

the real mistress of the King, dictating her will to him and being obeyed. She was the mistress also of her own fate, and such an admiration as one may give to the genius of vice, to a criminal purpose boldly conceived and boldly carried out, is due to her. For she was the illegitimate daughter of a *bourgeoise* woman, called Madame Poisson, a vulgar woman with a vulgar name, and in those days the King's mistresses were not usually selected from such a class. Yet as a girl she had determined to be the mistress of the King, and had the audacity to believe in her own power to secure her purpose. Her mother was well supplied with money by the man who had injured her husband. Lenormant de Tourichon is the name he disgraced, and, with some of his wealth, the daughter he could not legally claim was taught all the elegant accomplishments which money could procure. She had talent and industry, She had a natural taste for the fine arts, and a physical beauty and health which made her a notable figure on horseback. She rode like Diana, straight and fearlessly, and Louis XV., riding himself in the forest of Fontainebleau, did not fail to notice the girl who courted his attention with undisguised desire. In time she was married to a nephew of her 'foster-father.' The young man, Lenormant d'Etioles, seems to have loved her honestly, and for a time believed that he had her heart in his keeping. Perhaps he did—for a time. Perhaps this woman, who kept secret her criminal ambition, but never swerved from it, had a kind of love for her husband which only that ambition would crush out. She said so, in one of those candid utterances which sometimes come from women to their closest friends. To one of these, startled by her strange words and unable to forget them, she said: 'Only the King would shake my fidelity to my husband.' At the time these words may have seemed but the silly

jest of an idle moment. But the time came when they revealed a woman's vicious scheming. It is not quite clear how Jeanne d'Etioles established her position at Versailles. It is probable that as a kind of citizen queen—for her husband was wealthy, and her accomplishments received the homage of her class—she had been reported to the King, by his spies and go-betweens, as a woman worthy of his notice. There is a story of a dropped handkerchief—a threadbare trick, however fine the lace—at a ball in honour of the Dauphin's nuptials, which the King picked up as a sign of his complacency. We may believe in the handkerchief or not, but it is certain that after this date the crowd of courtiers at Versailles knew they had a new favourite to fear and flatter. At Versailles Jeanne d'Etioles took up her residence with unabashed delight, becoming—*de par le roi*—la Marquise de Pompadour. The husband wrote to her a passionate and pathetic letter, pleading his love, and imploring her return to honour and to the child she had borne to him. But ambition was the dominant passion of the Pompadour's heart, and husband or child was of no account when standing in her way.

She showed the letter to the King. She might at least get the credit of a good man's love. Louis read the letter and perhaps for a moment the shadow of his own infamy darkened his spirit. 'Madam,' he said, gravely, 'your husband is a very honest man.'

If Madame de Pompadour was a very wicked woman, and the point needs no argument, it must also be acknowledged that she played the part of King's mistress with real greatness of intellect and grandeur of manner. She was the mistress, not only of the King, but of France. The Ministers, the Abbé de Bernis and the Duc de Choiseul, were her tools. She took the helm of state, while the King looked

on with absolute indifference, and for twenty years she steered as passion or pride dictated. If a man wanted a pension or place he must please the Pompadour or go begging. Every office was filled by one of her creatures, and the proudest noble must plead to the Pompadour if his treasury should be filled by public money. The Court poets sung her praises and her 'virtues'—with poetic license; the Court painters strove to depict the beauties of her triple chin. The Court and the Church vied with each other in offering flattery and incense to the woman who held the reins of power which the *fainéant* King had dropped into her plump hands. Outside the Court and the Church there were poets and wits who dared to denounce the Pompadour in scurrilous verses, and in *poissardes* which stung her like salt in an open wound. If these were witty they were hardly wise, according to the wisdom of the world. Many a man who had been pleased with his wit thought little of his wisdom when he lay rotting in a dungeon of the Bastille, by order of a *lettre de cachet* from the Pompadour's boudoir.

But, if she could be vindictive to her enemies, she could also be a generous patron and a lavish friend. France, unsuccessful in war, losing India and Canada during the ministry of the Duc de Choiseul and the reign of Madame, was triumphant in the arts of peace. To Madame de Pompadour the material splendour of the reign of Louis Quinze was largely due. She had a real love for beautiful furniture, painting, pottery, printing, binding and building. She had not only a real love for these things, but she had a fine judgment and taste. She could execute a good engraving with her own hand. Many of the designs for the porcelain of the famous Sèvres factory were drawn by her pencil; she was a sumptuous patroness of the master bookbinders of the golden age of binding. Towards the end—

indeed throughout her reign—she was in danger of losing her ascendency over the King. Naturally the first passion she had inspired in him quickly flickered out in a heart so rotten that it could not be faithful in infidelity. But her ambition was satisfied if she could but keep the reins of power. She did not want his passion, so she provided him with other favourites, too insignificant in character to challenge her supremacy of intellect, and in return for this amicable assistance in the only desires which animated him he was willing to give her the mastery of France.

'My life has been a battle,' said the Pompadour on her death-bed, and she died fighting, and victorious to the last, against those Court factions which would have had her dragged at the cart's tail had she not been more subtle in intrigue, more powerful in crushing a half-developed plot, than these enemies were in concocting it. So La Pompadour passed, and with her the last shreds of dignity that still clothed the King. For though she was his mistress she had at least a certain sense of decency, even a certain nobility and magnificence of manner that claimed the outward respect of the Court world. But with the favourite who followed her, decency itself was outraged, and to the stately dignity of the Pompadour succeeded the gutter vulgarity of Du Barry.

Jeanne d'Etioles had come from the *bourgeoisie*, not then considered of the same clay as kings, but soon to be of more account. Yet not even the high nobility could deny her accomplishments and intellectual culture. Jeanne Lange, as she was at one time called, came not from the *bourgeoisie* but from the streets. Nothing worse can be said of her than that, after an unsavoury career as a Parisian milliner, she became the mistress of the Comte du Barry, who traded in women of her class. By him she was introduced to the

King, then sixty years of age. Louis XV.'s knowledge of evil women was by that time unrivalled, even for a king, but so far he had not consorted with women of the gutter. It is probable that his faded palate was piqued by the coarseness and grossness of a creature who spoke the *argot* of Paris and had the manners of a fishwife. He found her irresistible and gave to France a mistress who plunged her stout arms into the national coffers, elbow-deep. Even the Well-beloved was bound to pay some small attention to the peculiar code of propriety existing at his Court, and to salve the outraged feelings of the nobles, who did not by any means object to the King's keeping a mistress, but did strongly object to a street woman in that high position, he made Mademoiselle Lange almost 'respectable' by marrying her to a convenient husband. This was Guillaume du Barry, the brother of that other scoundrel with whom his new wife had previously lived. As an officer of marines with a beggarly salary, but princely desires of self-indulgence, he did not at all dislike the plan of taking a wife with whom he would not live, so that manners or morals need not be considered, for which service he would be richly recompensed by royal favours. The bargain was struck, a nameless woman became Comtesse du Barry and the mistress of the French Court and kingdom, a poor man became rich without the need of wit or work. Surely it was admirable!

So at Versailles Madame la Comtesse sat with a smile on her fat face—more hideous in the eyes of her contemporaries because unpainted and unpowdered—slapping the cheeks of her black page, putting lollipops into the beak of her pet parrot, saying rude things about the Duc de Choiseul, who hated her, and thereby got deposed, telling stories with the savour of Montmartre, and pointed with the pats and giggles of a loose woman to an elderly debauchee, and holding

up to ridicule the King's plain maiden daughters who had almost the monopoly of virtue in the Court of France.

A strange and quaint quartette, those daughters of the King—Mesdames de France! In an age when princesses were less safe from, and perhaps less careful of, amorous intrigues than ladies of lesser degree, love does not seem to have come near one of these four royal spinsters. They were quite, quite respectable! The vilest *roué* of the Court, who would kill a woman's reputation with as much carelessness as he would kill a flea on his dog's nose, could find nothing to hint or smirk over in the case of those four ladies. He would have been laughed at for his pains. For indeed Mesdames Adélaïde, Victoire, Sophie and Louise led as secluded and virtuous a life within the palace of Versailles, where virtue was not the commonest commodity, as if they were already cloistered in a community of nuns. The pages of Madame Campan (then Mademoiselle Genet), their young reading-woman, and afterwards the first waiting-woman of Marie Antoinette, remind one, when describing her duties with the four princesses, of the life of Fanny Burney at the Court of King George. The deadly monotony, the virtuous dullness, the stiff and formal etiquette of Queen Charlotte's household were similar in character to the daily life of Versailles in the apartments of Mesdames, though very much less stately and severe. The chief and almost the only amusement enjoyed by these ladies was the daily reading of the classic literature of France, delivered by the much-tried voice of Mademoiselle Genet. To them the works of Racine and Corneille (so portentously dull now, if one may be frank!) revealed a world of romance in which their imagination revelled for long hours every day. Poor ladies! Heroically virtuous in an age of vice, they were touched to the heart by the artificial sentiment of impossible

heroines, and shed tears over the sufferings of imaginary characters. Of the real world they knew but little, and nothing of the miseries and sufferings of the people who were already mutinous at their misery, and had grown tired of tears shed by their own women at dramas more tragic than those of the classical poets. Yet, perhaps, after all we are wrong in thinking that none of them had ever been touched by the real emotions of life. One of them at least, the Princess Victoire, may have had her secret romance, hugging her secret as a sweet sad thing years after its happening. For she was the least plain among her sisters. By some the Princess Victoire has been described as beautiful and gracious, with eyes that must have melted some man's heart, unless the courtiers at Versailles were colder than we credit them. She was the worldly one of that quartette. Madame Louise was always nun-like, hating the world even as she knew it in the backwater of life beyond which the great stream of gaiety and vice flowed on at Versailles. It was not surprising that she fled at last, with a secrecy from her own sisters which seemed hardly necessary, to the greater seclusion of a convent. Madame Sophie was too undeniably ugly and of too sullen a temperament to tempt, or to be tempted by, the gaieties and levities of life. 'Never did I behold a person of so revolting an appearance,' says the candid Madame Campan; 'she walked with the greatest rapidity, and in order to recognise people without looking at them she had acquired the habit of leering on one side, like a hare. This princess was so exceedingly diffident that a person might be with her daily, for years together, without hearing her utter a single word.' Madame Adélaïde does not seem to have had any claims to beauty, but had instead a temper which was apt to break out of bounds when touched by trifles. Perhaps even she had had her

disappointments and disillusions, so that all sweetness of youth was soured in the middle-aged spinster. But Madame Victoire was amiable and affable. She had no desire for a nunnery, though her religion was strong enough to cause her serious scruples with regard to the eating of water-fowl in Lent. Fortunately she obtained an agreeable bishop who gave the sanction of the Church to this little privilege, so that her piety and her palate were both satisfied. One must sympathise with the poor princess, and not blame her because the pleasures of the table were the best pleasures of her life. It was a dull, depressing life, more than a little tragic, one may fancy, if there is tragedy in unloved womanhood. So in paying homage to her goodness of heart we may pass by her *gourmandise*. When Mademoiselle Genet asked her, with a little fear, whether she would become a nun like Madame Louise, she pointed to the sofa and said: 'Make yourself easy, my dear; I shall never have Louise's courage. I love the conveniences of life too well; this couch is my destruction.' She did not guess that one day, in her old age, she would be glad to leave that couch, not to fly from the temptations of the world, but from the savage, murderous hands of a frenzied people.

Almost the only interruption to the private life of 'Mesdames de France,' and the one daily excitement, that in time must have been but little exciting, was the visit to the King at his *débotter*, or time of unbooting. This was always the occasion of solemn etiquette. 'The princesses,' says Madame Campan, 'put on an enormous hoop, which set out a petticoat ornamented with gold or embroidery; they fastened a long train round their waists and concealed the "undress" of the rest of their clothing by a long cloak of black taffety which enveloped them to the chin. The gentlemen ushers, the ladies in waiting, the pages, the esquires,

and the ushers bearing large flambeaux, accompanied them to the King. In a moment the whole palace, generally so still, was in motion ; the King kissed each princess on the forehead, and the visit was so short that the reading which it interrupted was frequently resumed at the end of a quarter of an hour ; the princesses returned to their apartments, untied the strings of their petticoats and trains, took up their tapestry again, and I went back to my book.'

It was very rarely that Louis XV. came to the private apartments of his daughters. He had no great love for them, and in his later years, under the influence of the gutter Queen, he so far forgot his dignity as to call them by the cruel nicknames which he had learnt from his coarse women, in the presence of the poor princesses' own waiting-women. They were ugly names certainly, and scarcely witty. Being the fattest of his daughters, as he explained to Madame Campan, he called Madame Victoire ' Coche,' the old sow ; Madame Adélaïde was ' Loque,' a scrap ; Madame Sophie, ' Graille,' a rag ; and Madame Louise was ' Chiffe,' or shoddy silk. The whole Court knew these nicknames, and Madame du Barry made merry with them, in her peculiar style of pleasantry. France had fallen low indeed when such a woman was allowed to be present in Councils of State, where she stayed during the discussion of national problems, ' ridiculously perched up on the arm of his chair, playing off all sorts of childish monkey tricks, calculated to please an old Sultan.'

According to the princesses' reading-woman, this ugly siren once dared to snatch a packet of sealed letters from the King's hand. ' Among them she had observed one from Comte de Broglie ; she told the King that she knew the vile Broglie spoke ill of her to him, and that for once, at least, she would make sure he should read nothing respecting

her. The King wanted to get the packet again ; she resisted, and made him run two or three times round the Council Chamber, and at length, passing the fireplace, she threw the letters into the grate, where they were consumed. The King became furious ; he seized his audacious mistress by the arm, and put her out of the door without speaking to her. Madame du Barry thought herself utterly disgraced ; she returned, however, and remained two hours alone, abandoned to the utmost distress. The King went to her ; the Countess, in tears, threw herself at his feet, and he pardoned her.'

There were other less important people than the Duc de Choiseul and the Comte de Broglie who hated the woman. One of them was a pretty, impudent young lady named Madame de Rosen, who was bold enough to scoff at Madame du Barry to her face. The King's mistress complained to her old debauchee, but he laughed at the insults she so bitterly resented. In his heart he knew that she deserved them. ' She is only a schoolgirl,' he said at length to pacify the indignant creature, ' and she should be treated as a schoolgirl.' The words gave to Madame du Barry her idea of revenge, and she carried it out in a characteristic spirit of low vulgarity. Madame de Rosen was invited in a friendly manner to her rooms, and thinking, perhaps, that she had gone a little too far with a woman who would make a bad enemy, she accepted. But a few minutes after her arrival she was suddenly seized by a number of lusty serving wenches, who, stripping the struggling girl, according to the fashion then prevalent with refractory schoolgirls, gave her a severe beating. When the story came to the King's ears he considered it a good joke, but to the ladies of the Court it made one more count in the indictment of hatred against the low-bred woman who controlled the weak and vice-ridden King.

Well, let them pass, King Louis and his harem. A more

graceful ghost, the ghost of a gay young girl, giddy but not dissolute, beautiful but not of the professional beauty that might be bought by the highest bidder, still flits through the painted chambers of Versailles. There is a sweet fragrance still about the memory of the young Dauphine who came from the Austrian Court, where she had been brought up in innocence, and even in simplicity, to the Court of France, where innocence was an impossible virtue and simplicity a sin. The memory of Marie Antoinette is clouded by the shadows of her later years, and there are some who can even find it in their heart to hate her because she still held to the pride of royal prerogatives when the King himself was willing to yield to the people's will; because she tried vainly to give him some of her own strength of mind, and only made him obstinate, but not strong, by fits and starts, adding the danger of obstinacy to weakness; and because she intrigued to save the Crown, against the enemies of revolution, and tried, sometimes foolishly and sometimes bitterly, to safeguard the privileges of an order so rotten and wretched in cowardice that it deserved to perish. But one cannot feel anything but sympathy, and some tenderness even, for the young Princess and the young Queen. She was a nymph among satyrs, or at least a gracious and wholesome girl among a crowd of men and women who were mostly vile. Not all of them. She attracted around her some few women of fidelity and virtue and womanly sweetness, who stand in pleasant contrast to the scarlet women of the Court, and even a few men of chivalry with a code of honour good for the age they lived in. But it was a dangerous environment. Innocence itself cannot stand in the midst of corruption without losing something of its freshness, and its sweetness soon becomes soured. An angel could hardly have lived at Versailles without giving occasion for scandal and becoming

splashed with the mud of calumny. And Marie Antoinette was no angel. She was a young woman who had a very hearty desire for earthly happiness. She liked laughter, and had a fund of merriment which was sometimes rather naughty and terribly dangerous. She was witty, and had a sense of the ridiculous, both traps ready for the snarer in a Court where wit was relished but revenged, and where the most ridiculous things were the most sacred. She was high-spirited for a time until all her spirits were crushed by constant enmity and outrage, and before she had learnt to be always looking for pitfalls and precipices she was careless and audacious in the desire to be pleased and to enjoy the gaieties of life with liberty. It was only after the fearful episode of the diamond necklace, the first milestone along her highway of sorrow, that Marie Antoinette learnt caution, and then too late. It was from that time that she became the Queen rather than the woman, showing secrecy and reserve, and putting on the armour of suspicion instead of wearing her heart on her sleeve and revealing the mood of the moment on a smiling face.

She must have been beautiful in those early days, though even this has been denied. Certainly it is a charming and winsome portrait that is drawn, item by item, in the secret memoirs of Bachaumont, like Olivia's merry inventory to the boylike Viola :

'Here is the exact portrait of Madame la Dauphine,' he writes. 'This princess is of a height proportioned to her age, thin without being emaciated, and such as a young girl is when not fully formed. She is very well made, well proportioned in all her limbs. Her hair is a beautiful blonde ; I judge it will some day be a golden chestnut ; it is well planted on her head. Her forehead is fine ; the shape of her face a handsome oval, but a little long ; the eyebrows are as well

marked as a blonde can have them. Her eyes are blue, but not insipid ; they sparkle with a vivacity full of intelligence. Her nose is aquiline, a little sharp at the tip. Her mouth is small, the lips full, especially the lower one, which everyone knows to be the Austrian lip. The whiteness of her skin is dazzling, and she has a natural colour which dispenses her from putting on rouge. Her carriage and bearing were those of an archduchess ; but her dignity is tempered by gentleness, and it is difficult on seeing this princess to refuse her a respect mingled with tenderness.'

Marie Antoinette, though she was inclined to be happy and to make the best and brightest of France and the French Court, did not find it easy, even in her early days, as Dauphine and Queen. Curiously, as Dauphine, one of her few good friends was the old *roué* King, who, by some psychological miracle, had enough decency left in him to be touched by the innocence of his grandson's wife. Her enemies, and she had many from the outset, were of her own household, for the people of France were prepared to pet her then. Her arch-enemy, so she thought herself, though unjustly, was a formidable lady who played the part of Mother Grundy and found her hands full, as may be expected, at Versailles. This was Madame la Comtesse de Noailles, naughtily nicknamed ' Madame Étiquette ' by the Dauphine, to the delight of all Court ladies of youthful years who trembled at the strictness of this mistress of ceremonies, and to the deep annoyance of the lady herself and the lady's important family, to whose ears the new title was quickly told, and a hundred times repeated by whispering tongues. Certainly Marie Antoinette must have been a sore trial to this noble dame, for from the first she resisted, and with a pretty temper by all accounts, those thousand rules of etiquette which were supposed to safeguard the honour, the dignity, and the

MARIE ANTOINETTE
REINE DE FRANCE.

virtue of royal princesses. There was much excuse for this rebellion. It is not pleasant, hardly dignified even, for a Princess Royal to shiver in a state of nature while her chemise is travelling from hand to hand of ladies in an ascending scale of rank, the most supreme of whom might claim the privilege of covering her mistress in this most intimate garment. Nor was the publicity of the royal family's meals, when any gaping rascal of Paris had free admittance to see them eat—the most popular sight of the day—more decent or more dignified. Judged by the more simple code of modern royalty, Marie Antoinette was right in abolishing these things and claiming more privacy with a deal less ceremony. Yet, after all, it is dangerous to disregard the traditions of a nation. It must always give offence and sometimes opens the door to scandalmongers. To say the least, Marie Antoinette was indiscreet in defying the conventional ceremonies of the French Court with such open scoffing. It would have been better if she had not made an enemy of 'Madame Étiquette.' She did so with an easy gaiety that was amusing but unwise. Falling off a donkey one day when surrounded by her ladies, she lay still and in a merry voice bade them fetch Madame Étiquette, that she might say how the Queen of France should get up again. The laughter that greeted this good jest had echoed unpleasantly in the ears of the De Noailles faction.

When Louis the Well-beloved had died of the smallpox and had been buried with little lamentation, when the odious Du Barry had been banished from the Court and Mesdames de France had been given the château of Bellevue as their own residence, after years of restricted seclusion at Versailles, and at length when Madame de Noailles herself resigned her position in disgust, the young Queen departed more than ever from the ceremonial usages of her position,

and indulged in the delights of liberty. By so doing she gave offence to all the noble old ladies of the Court, who could not forget the discipline and decorum of their own youth and of youthful Queens; and many younger ladies, with such little virtue that they could not easily believe in virtue that was not hedged round with barriers, professed to be shocked at the behaviour of Marie Antoinette. The Queen knew all this and laughed at it. She was a little too ready with her laughter, and was easily disconcerted at any touch of drollery. When all the ladies of the Court came to pay their morning respects to the new King and Queen upon the death of the Well-beloved, one of the young ladies of the Queen's household, the Marquise de Clermont-Tonnerre, became very fatigued with the ceremony of standing behind her mistress, and with merry impudence squatted on the floor behind the shelter of friendly hoops. The Queen's quick eye saw the incident, and she could not prevent herself from laughing behind her fan. The contrast of this naughtiness to the gravity of the occasion and the appearance of her visitors was too much for her. 'Little black bonnets with great wings, old shaking heads, low curtsies, keeping time with the motions of the head, made, it must be admitted,' says Madame Campan, who tells this story, 'a few venerable dowagers appear ridiculous.' The impudent young marchioness and the terrific old ladies stirred the Queen's quick sense of the ridiculous so much that she could not control her face. A queen's face is always watched, and the fan did not hide this laughter. From that day Marie Antoinette was called a 'moqueuse' by her enemies, and the epithet is not one that makes for love.

These things may seem trivial. They were thought trivial at first by Marie Antoinette, but not when she found that they surrounded her with spite and malice. When

still new to her queenly rank she felt herself nearly alone. At first the King himself was but a husband in name, and less than a friend.

Louis XVI., the grandson of the last king, was a strange and somewhat pathetic creature in his early manhood. He had few, if any, of the vices of his ancestors, unless his huge and famous appetite may be called a vice. Yet he had few of their finer qualities either, save a passive courage which towards the end made him an almost noble figure. As a young man he was shy to boorishness, taciturn to sulkiness, with no touch of dignity, with no elegance of manner, with no spark of wit. He loved best, as all the world knows, to potter about with locksmith's tools and clockmaker's instruments. He would have made a respectable artisan in the workshops of Charenton, and as such he would have been, no doubt, a happier man. He could not understand the wit of the Court triflers, who made him a butt to his face, and he disliked their gallantries. He was shy and suspicious at first even of his own pretty and winsome wife, thinking, like all stupid men, that gaiety and wittiness which they do not understand may be directed against themselves. It was a secret but very real grief to the young Queen, and it needed all her natural charm to tame the young bear, to draw out a little sociability in him, and to win a husband's love. When she did succeed in becoming a wife in more than name, and winning what is to all good women the precious gift of motherhood, she was not ill-rewarded for her patience. Boorish he still remained, but he loved her with that faithful, trustful love which is more common in the boor than in the gallant.

But when his shyness had been conquered his first signs of sociability were more amiable than admirable. His sense of humour was in the style of sheer buffoonery, and at

his 'couchers,' when the great nobles of the Court, the Duc de Coigny, the Duc de Laval, the Marquis de Conflans and others assembled in his chamber, he amused himself by throwing his *cordon bleu* at their heads, trying to hook those who wore earrings. The Prince de Ligne, in his memoirs, describes how the King almost strangled him once with this rough gaiety. 'I was angry and said, "The King has touched me; may God heal me!"' The Queen in time cured the King of this love of horseplay, and he learnt to show consideration for those who deserved it. But always his familiar conversation ran chiefly upon hunting stories which no one cared to hear. The Queen found him very dull at times. Yet there were compensations. He was good, he loved her, and he was not jealous—three admirable qualities in a husband, most admirable in a king.

So little jealous was he that with a very good grace he gave the Queen for her own use the lodge and garden at Versailles, called Le Petit Trianon, and agreed amiably to her half-jesting condition that he should not enter this part of the palace buildings without an invitation. Like a child with her doll's house, the Little Trianon was to be her 'very own.' It was an innocent form of pleasure, yet the Queen would have done better if she had burnt the little house to the ground, and swept its 'English garden' into the rubbish-heap, rather than have spent her merry hours there with her private friends. For the Little Trianon had a bad name, and was soon to have a worse one. Louis XV. had played the *roué* there with his various mistresses. Dressed as shepherds and shepherdesses, *à la Watteau*, in that spirit of artificial simplicity and rural sentimentality which Rousseau—though perfectly sincere himself—had made a fashionable craze, the Well-beloved and his courtiers and courtesans had plucked the flower of love-in-idleness. On the other

side of the wall, not very far away, were the people of Paris, rather hungry, and fond of the strange philosophy that was being talked in wine-shops, making men's eyes blaze with a wild sort of drunkenness not caused by drink. Foul and vile stories of what went on in the Petit Trianon at Versailles were current coin in these haunts of the semi-starved, were passed indeed now and again into higher circles of the *bourgeoisie*, who were not too eager to test whether this coinage rang true or false. So it was a place of evil odours, in spite of its English garden and fragrant flowers. It was a place which smelt most evilly in the nostrils of the Parisian people when it was rumoured that the Queen had given it another name, calling it 'Little Vienna.' Rumour lies in this case as in most others, but it was from this time that the Queen herself received another name in Paris wine-shops. They called her 'the Austrian woman,' and the French hated Austria.

Poor Queen! She still loved her own liberty and wanted friends to love her and to love as well—more than ever when she began to learn how little friendship there was in France. There was one lady at the Court with whom Marie Antoinette had fallen in love at first sight. It is pleasant to use this phrase for women's friendship. The Princesse de Lamballe was one of those women whose sympathy is never soured by sorrow, and whose beauty has no offence in it even to those who cannot boast of any. She has not only been acknowledged beautiful by all who knew her in the flesh—and her portraits do not disappoint us now—but also to be virtuous, and lovely in character. She had had a tragic story, and the sadness of it touched hearts that were not easily softened by the misfortunes of marriage. The fourth daughter of a Prince of Savoy, she was betrothed at eighteen to the young Prince de Lamballe. It was a

brilliant match. The young man was the son of the Duc de Penthièvre. This in itself seemed a guarantee of happiness and certainty of wealth. The Duc de Penthièvre was not only one of the most distinguished nobles of France (descended from Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, whose natural son was legitimised as Comte de Toulouse) but he was the noblest example of the *ancienne noblesse*, a good, gallant, and generous man, kind to the poor, chivalrous to women, faithful to his King and Queen, an admirable husband and a devoted father. This seems rather impossibly virtuous, yet his contemporaries agree. His only son was a little wild, yet during his first married days to the Princesse de Carignan he seemed to have reformed. His reformation, perhaps, was rather too enthusiastic. He no longer wished to have a pack of hounds, so he wrote to his father, which he had so ardently desired before his marriage. The pack of hounds would have been less dangerous than a certain Mademoiselle La Chassaigne of the Comédie Française, whom he ardently desired within five months of his wedding-day. So strong was the infatuation that he left the Hôtel de Toulouse, his father's Parisian palace, where his young wife wept for him, and went to the spider's web of La Chassaigne. The Duc de Penthièvre was stricken to the heart by this shame, and implored his son to return. The young wife, agonised and weak with weeping, was seized with nervous attacks, from which she was never wholly free until she became cured by a strange cheerfulness in a prison cell with death outside the window. The son did at length return, and then to die. The Princesse de Lamballe became a widow almost before she had experienced her wifehood, and the poor old duke, her loyal friend and protector from now until the end, was a broken man. But he persevered in goodness. 'He is certainly the most perfect man on earth,' wrote Madame

d'Oberkirch, a celebrated lady of the time. 'He lives at Sceaux, a charming retreat, far from the Court, far from intrigues. He is never consoled, and never will be consoled, for the death of his only son, the Prince de Lamballe. His grief is as beyond description as it is beyond comfort. His only remaining child is the Duchesse de Chartres, who has inherited her father's goodness and virtues, as well as his immense fortune.'

For some time the Duc de Penthièvre lived with his daughter-in-law in retirement at Rambouillet (afterwards purchased, by the generous consent of its owner, by Louis XVI.), but a little brightness and joy interrupted his usual quietude when his daughter, as mentioned in the letter above, married the Duc de Chartres, a distant cousin to the King, and afterwards famous, or infamous, to all the world as 'Philippe Egalité' Orléans.

The Princesse de Lamballe returned to Court after a long period of mourning, and narrowly escaped the dishonour of becoming the last wife of Louis XV. The De Noailles family, with whom she was connected, endeavoured to achieve this infamy, but the Duc de Choiseul, chief minister of France, was the opposing influence. The situation was solved and the Princess was saved by the advent of Mademoiselle Lange, *alias* Madame la Comtesse du Barry. It was then that Marie Antoinette became attracted by the beautiful young woman who was to be her lifelong and heroically faithful friend. The Princesse de Lamballe was one of those very few who stood by the Queen in her last dark days, and she laid down her life because she would not do dishonour to the name of friendship.

The Queen's enthusiasm for her was almost without bounds. She went so far that she wished to revive for her the old office of Superintendent of the Household which

had not been maintained for many years. It carried with it an enormous salary, and the ministers, knowing the need of economy, were as much against its revival as the would-be reformers of the nation, who considered it an outrage. The ladies of the Court were equally incensed at the idea. They were jealous of 'the Queen's favourite,' as the Princesse de Lamballe was already called—an unpleasant name both in and out of Court—and they were hot against the prospect of submitting to a lady who would have the right of ordering them in their duties about the Queen's person, and of superintending the social side of her establishment. But the Queen persisted, and Louis, who by this time could refuse her nothing, wrote the order of appointment. The Queen was very glad. 'Judge of my happiness,' she wrote eagerly to her 'favourite'; 'I shall make my friend happy, and shall rejoice in it even more than she.' So the Princesse de Lamballe was officially installed at Versailles in a position of great dignity and responsibility, superior to many ladies of older years and longer connection with the Court. It was the cause of much envy and heartburning. Ladies devoted to the Queen, like the Princesse de Chimay and the Comtesse de Maillé, refused to accept office under the 'Superintendent' as *dame d'honneur* and *dame du Palais*. It was at this time that the Comtesse de Noailles, 'Madame Étiquette,' packed up her traps and departed in dudgeon. The balls given by the Princesse de Lamballe, in virtue of her office, were but poorly attended. Only the Queen's closest and staunchest friends put in an appearance.

These friends deserve some notice, for they were men and women who played important parts, mostly, however, base and cowardly parts, in the Revolution which was as yet undreamt of. Chief among them were the two brothers of the King, the Comte de Provence and the Comte d'Artois, the

Duchesse de Chartres (afterwards Duchesse d'Orléans), the Baron de Besenval, the Baron de Breteuil, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, the Duc de Coigny, the Duc de Guines, Count Esterhazy, the Comte and Comtesse Jules de Polignac, the Prince de Ligne, and Count Axel Fersen.

Of the King and his two brothers a wit known to the Prince de Ligne uttered the following audacity: 'Do you want to know what those three brothers are? A fat locksmith, the wit of a provincial café, a boulevard strutter.' De Ligne, a Royalist and a very faithful friend, asserts that these words were caricatures. Perhaps they were, but caricatures are sometimes excellent portraits. The Comte de Provence, 'Monsieur de France,' as he was always called, had a good memory for somewhat doubtful stories, and could make a cheap witticism pass off by capping it with a classical quotation; but he had no depth of intellect, no sincerity, and no heart. His utter weakness of character was more apparent in later days. The Comte d'Artois's chief qualities were a good leg and an elegant waist, of which he was inordinately vain. 'He played the pretty French prince sometimes,' admits the Prince de Ligne, 'but he had as much grace as he had kindness.' He was a more attractive character than his brother certainly, for in his early days his gaiety of spirits was not without charm. But they had their danger. This young man might develop into another Louis the Well-beloved, from which God save France! That was in the thoughts of some men when they studied this 'boulevard strutter.' The Prince de Ligne was a particular friend of the Comte d'Artois, but more so of the Queen, and he tells a good tale which gives a bright and vivid little impression of life as it sometimes went at Versailles:

'I had the pleasure of being obstinate occasionally with sovereigns who were often despots in merrymaking. M. le

Comte d'Artois wanted me to hunt the wild boar with him. "To-morrow, at seven o'clock." "No, monseigneur; in the first place it is too early, and then the Queen wishes me to ride on horseback with her as far as the Cross of Toulouse." "I don't wish it." "It will be done for all that." "You will come with me." 'No, monseigneur." "I give you my word that you shall." "And I mine that I shall not."

'The next morning, at six o'clock, great racket at my door; the young prince attacked, and I defended. He called our common friends and I barricaded myself in. He burst the door, dragged me out of bed, shouting victory, put on my clothes himself, and forced me along, almost lifting me on the horse he had in waiting for me. Just as he was mounting his, after putting my foot in the stirrup, I escaped. He flung himself off and pursued me. I hid, and he passed me. I did not know where I was going, but I rushed through the King's kitchens; twenty scullions and as many saucepans gave chase, taking me perhaps for a poisoner of his Majesty. I ran through a crowd of porters, who took me for an assassin and were after me with their long chair-poles.

'The young prince was off the scent and I had time to look about me. I went up to the theatre and hid behind a lot of scenes that were piled on the ground. I was betrayed by some workmen who went down, and up came the prince and discovered my feet and tried to pull me out by them. I got them free and sprang the other way, but in trying to clear the scenes I met with a devil of a nail, which tore my whole right cheek and covered me with blood. The prince was in great distress, and consoled me and kissed me, and went off to his hunt and his wild boars alone. I put plenty of salt in my wound, bathed it with brandy and took my handkerchief; the Queen was waiting for me and I mounted my horse and rode off with her. This was how, though

I suffered much, for the cold was severe, I kept my word of honour to the prince.'

The Prince de Ligne, who so prided himself on these niceties of 'honour,' deserves a little portrait to himself. He was one of those foreigners whom the Queen made her favourites, thereby arousing the envy and hatred of her French courtiers. This love of foreigners was to do her much harm, but she had her excuse, and a pretty good one. 'At least,' she said, 'they are not like Frenchmen; they ask nothing from me.' Friendship with people like the Polignacs had to be paid for with pensions and places, but the Prince de Ligne and other foreigners who came to Versailles asked nothing but friendship itself, and were well content.

This prince was a Belgian by birth, though in many ways he was more French than the French. He was one of those men whom even democrats may admire as a romantic and amiable figure among aristocrats who were mostly rotten at heart. He was a gallant soldier and an honest gentleman. Handsome, witty, full of grace and charm of manner, he had the instincts of an age of chivalry as out of date as Don Quixote. There is no doubt that he loved the Queen, but there was no shame in such love for either of them. His memoirs are delightful reading, modest, though he had something to boast of, and full of kindly sentiment for the French nobles and people, although he lived long enough to see the worst side of both classes. He gives a lively description of his youth, a youth which lasted far beyond the middle age of most men, being, as he said he would fain be, one 'who is never more than twenty.' His father had a curious hatred for his son, and seems to have been a tyrannical and selfish kind of scoundrel. 'My father never liked me,' he writes, 'I do not know why, for we never knew each

other. But it was not the fashion at that time to be a good father or a good husband. My mother was very much afraid of him ; she was brought to bed of me attired in a great farthingale.'

One of the proudest days of the young man's life was when he became colonel of the regiment that bore the family name and of which his father was proprietary colonel. In his memoirs he is amused by the letters which passed between the prince and himself on this occasion. 'Monseigneur,' he wrote, 'I have the honour to inform your Highness that I have just been appointed colonel of your regiment. I am, with profound respect, &c.' The prince wrote the following amiability: 'Monsieur, after the misfortune of having you for a son, nothing could more keenly affect me than the misfortune of having you for colonel.'

Young de Ligne was no carpet knight. He loved the fever of action and the thrill of peril. He was 'as happy as a king' when he heard the first balls whistle. But for his rank and wealth he would have been called a soldier of fortune. He served with the Austrians in the campaigns of the war for the Bavarian succession. He became the friend and trusted diplomat of Frederick the Great, and represented Austrian interests in the Courts of Europe. It was in this capacity that he came to Paris, and, although faithful to Austria, became a Frenchman in manners and spirit. 'A good fellow, but a trifle wild' was the verdict of Madame du Deffand and of others who studied his gay and effervescent character. He set up for a wit in the style of the Chevalier de Boufflers, who was his *cher ami*, but France, somewhat critical in this regard, did not allow his claim, though his charm was acknowledged. Although 'a trifle wild,' he was not in any sense a debauchee, and his relations with the Frenchwomen who attracted him

were honourable. To the Queen he was a faithful friend, and at the Court of Versailles he spent many merry months, enjoying youth and life with a pleasant enthusiasm. To those days he looked back in after days with infinite regret and tenderness. He lived to see France, which he had well loved, in the agonies of revolution, and the Queen whom he adored executed by her people. These memories were tragic when old age did at last come upon the man who had so long kept his youthfulness. 'Memories!' he cries in a moment of depression. 'They call them sweet and tender, but in whatever form they come to me I declare them hard and bitter. War, love, success of other days, when we have had all that, you poison our present! What a difference! . . . *Then* I thought well of men. Women, the Court, the town, the men of business had not then deceived me. My soldiers (a society of honest men, purer, more delicate than men of the world) adored me, my peasants blessed me, my trees grew, that which I loved was still in the world, it existed for me. O memory, memory!' Like the Duc de Penthièvre, in his old age he never ceased to mourn the death of a son in the first war of the Revolution, whom he loved devotedly, and in whom all his hopes had centred. The Revolution broke many hearts, alas! It is better to think of the Prince de Ligne in his earlier days, when he was the welcome guest at the Petit Trianon with the Polignacs, the King's brothers, and the other friends of Marie Antoinette.

The Polignacs: they too must have remembrance. The Comtesse Jules de Polignac was the best hated woman at the Court by those who disliked royal favourites, and her friendship with the Queen was a misfortune to the Queen herself. She was a beautiful woman, in a different style more beautiful, perhaps, than the Princesse de Lamballe. She had held aloof from the Court for awhile on account of

poverty which she avowed to the Queen with a candour that may not have been quite without a little cunning. Marie Antoinette made this excuse for absence null and void by heaping offices and places upon the whole Polignac family, husband, brothers, and the Comtesse herself, who became governess of the royal children. Even the Princesse de Lamballe was for a time neglected by the Queen in favour of her new friend. Almost every evening she went to the Polignacs' drawing-room, or they came to her apartments. It was at this time also that the Queen became enamoured of private theatricals, very private theatricals, at the Petit Trianon, which were supposed to be kept a dead secret from the Court, and for a time even from the King, though subsequently he was admitted, and enjoyed them. Modern plays of a rather dangerous character were acted by the Queen and her friends, and the Comtesse Jules, as Madame de Polignac was always called, contrived to keep out the Princesse de Lamballe, of whom she was very jealous. Naturally the princess was much hurt at the Queen's conduct in this respect, but she at least had nothing petty in her character, and her devoted friendship was unaltered. But jealousies and spites were as thick at Versailles and Fontainebleau as motes in a London sunbeam. At the latter place, where the royal family were in residence while the King hunted, a storm arose among the Court ladies and gentlemen about the Queen's intimacy with Madame de Polignac. The Comtesse Jules was an excellent actress outside the Trianon theatre as well as on the stage. She went to the Queen and said, with tears in her eyes, 'We do not yet love each other enough to be unhappy if we part; but I see it coming; soon I shall not be able to leave you. Forestall that time. Send me from Fontainebleau; I am not made for the Court; everybody here knows too much for me.'

Her horses were already harnessed to go. But the Queen was passionate at the thought of losing the friend who, if we are not mistaken, would have died rather than leave. Marie Antoinette seized both her hands and implored her to stay, embraced her with the utmost tenderness, and was as tearful as the little countess. The door was half open, and the Comte d'Artois, coming in at the moment, was a witness to the sentimental little scene. He laughed in his scoffing way, and left them, saying, 'Don't disturb yourselves.' Madame de Polignac did not go. Perhaps it would have been better if she had gone.

The amateur theatricals had to be abandoned on account of scandal, although they were really very harmless and innocent. But whatever the Queen did, or failed to do, was certain to be construed evilly by enemies within and without the Court. She got up one morning and went, with the King's permission and with a number of ladies and gentlemen, to the top of a hill to see the coming of the day, a sight she had never previously enjoyed. This also was very innocent, if a little indiscreet, but the incident, becoming rumoured, was taken hold of by scurrilous tavern poets and gutter wits, who invented obscene ballads and *poissardes* in connection with it. One day, when the Queen was going to the opera, her carriage broke down, and to avoid a scene she immediately hailed a cab and drove to her destination, with her lady of honour, in that humble conveyance. 'Is it not droll?' she said gaily to the company awaiting her. 'I came in a *fiacre*!' The story was bruited abroad, and Parisian garbage-mongers twisted it into an ugly and disreputable shape.

In some cases the Queen was really to blame in carelessness for her reputation. In the early days, for instance, of her queenhood she was taken ill of the measles at the Petit

Trianon. It was not a serious illness, and though she kept to her bed she could still enjoy the society of her friends, and would not forgo it. If they had been lady friends nothing could have been said, but she admitted to her bed-chamber four men not of the most exalted moral code. They were not only admitted, but they stayed from seven o'clock in the morning until eleven at night, and would have stayed all the night through if it had not been for the protests of the Queen's ladies. These men who played at waiting-women formed a strange quartette. Valentin Esterhazy was one of them, a dashing young Hungarian soldier who had so won the Queen's affections that she paid his debts out of her privy purse, but not so privily that the fact was unknown to those who placed the vilest interpretation upon what at the worst was ill-advised generosity. The Duc de Coigny was another, a soldier, forty years of age, and not more virtuous than noblemen and soldiers of that epoch of French history. The third was the Duc de Guines, the French ambassador in London, renowned for his monstrous fat and his elegance of dress, a combination of qualities that gave much trouble to his *valets de chambre*, who had to hoist him into his skin-tight breeches and polished top-boots. He played the flute like an angel in a Cimabue picture, but otherwise he was not angelic. The fourth man who sat by the Queen's bedside was the most interesting. Pierre Victor Baron de Besenval, of Polish origin but Swiss nationality, was a man whose grey hairs and witty tongue made him popular with women, who liked his wit and looked upon his grey hairs, rather incautiously, it seems, as a moral security. He was celebrated as the best *raconteur* in the Polignacs' drawing-room, but really he had a more substantial basis of honourable renown, for he had fought with distinguished bravery in many European wars, and as a swordsman

he had few equals. He reminds us of d'Artagnan, having the same bluntness, the same delightful audacity, and the same flamboyant courage. But he was not a safe man either with ladies or with their husbands. He was, for instance, the friend of the Duc d'Orléans, which—however much we may whitewash the character of 'Philippe Egalité,' and he was not quite the monster of iniquity as popularly painted—was not the highest passport to a reputation. With regard to his relations with women we know that, as Gouverneur Morris puts it in a delicate way, 'he was most intimately the friend of Madame de Ségur as well as with the maréchal. She, with an unusual degree of candour, avowed her passion to her husband, and all three lived very happily together till her death. The present Vicomte de Ségur is son to the baron, his elder brother is supposed to be son to the maréchal.'

Well, this was the quartette who established themselves, with the effrontery of grenadiers and the gallantry of soldiers of fortune, in Marie Antoinette's bedchamber. It seems a little scandalous, though one must not forget that the bedchamber was then a recognised reception-room for gentlemen as well as ladies. Modesty is always a relative term, and depends more upon the code of manners than of morals. We have the evidence of her waiting-women at least that the Queen had stricter notions of modesty than most ladies of her time, and even in this episode we may see more indiscretion than any violation of decency. But it was indiscreet, and therefore blameworthy in a Queen who knew something of the dangers surrounding her.

One may linger a little over the gaiety of the Queen's household before the episode of the diamond necklace and the terrors of revolution made Versailles a place of melancholy and gloom. In spite of jealousy and malice the royal

household was not entirely disagreeable, and before cowardice took possession of the courtiers their high spirits and love of merriment reveal them in their pleasantest aspect.

To the Prince de Ligne we are indebted for another picture in which we may see these people as flesh and blood, and not merely as well-dressed dummies. He describes a jest played on the Comte d'Artois during his convalescence from a somewhat serious illness:

'As fêtes of convalescence are usually as tiresome as the illness itself, the Comtesse Diane determined to give one to provoke him. The Queen, who was partly in the secret, brought the Comte d'Artois with her. He trembled when he arrived. Polignac and Esterhazy, masked as Loves, darted upon him and held him, almost throttled, in his chair beneath his own portrait, diabolically painted, under which was the legend: "Vive Monseigneur, Comte d'Artois." The Duc de Guiche, as Genius, held his head. The Duc de Coigny preceded me, singing: "*V'là le plaisir, v'là le plaisir.*" I had a coat and two huge wings exactly like those of the cherubim in the parish church. The Queen, Mesdames de Polignac, de Guiche and de Polastron were dressed as shepherdesses, de Lille as a shepherd with a sheep. We sang couplets as silly as the prince upon his throne, where he behaved like a maniac. Mine were full of insipid flattery about his face and other points, made expressly to infuriate him. I never saw anything in better taste than this piece of bad taste, which outdid all other convalescent fêtes; nothing could be gayer than the homage of respect and love we paid to the prince, who, by his grimaces, was sending us to the devil, not knowing at first whether we were in fun or in earnest.'

We get glimpses of the Queen's graciousness and naturalness of manner which show that she had not yet lost the

Prieur inv. & del.

REPAS DES GARDES DU CORPS DANS LA SALLE DE L'OPÉRA DE VERSAILLES

le 1er Octobre 1789.

affection of the French people, although scandal was busy in corners. At a ball given at the Opera House in honour of the birth of the Dauphin, Marie Antoinette led the first quadrille with the oldest bodyguard of the household, Monsieur de Pridy, which aroused much enthusiasm. But she captivated all hearts at the time by dancing afterwards with a private of this regiment (in which all were gentlemen), a young soldier named M. de Mouret de Tarles. This act of condescension was the occasion of a great loyal demonstration, and the ballroom shook with the shouts of '*Vive la Reine!*' Not many years were to pass when those words would cost a man his life, and the Queen's ears would never thrill at them again. So we may leave to the imagination many other incidents of the same kind which made life pass at Versailles pleasantly enough, in spite of annoyances and household intrigues, until we come to that episode of the necklace which changed the Queen's character and did her dreadful harm. It need not be told in all its details, for it has been told a thousand times. So much has been made of it, in fact too much of its mystery. It was mysterious at the time, and the French people, who did not know the secret history of it, let their imagination feed upon the facts that crept out until they were gorged with mystery. But now it all seems a plain tale of villainy and folly, of which the Queen herself was an innocent victim.

The famous necklace was made from diamonds collected at enormous cost from many parts of the world by a jeweller named Bœhmer, who had spent his whole fortune on them. His object had been to sell them to Louis XV. for his mistress, Du Barry, but unfortunately for the jeweller the Well-beloved had died like other men who are not kings. It was a heavy blow to Bœhmer. It is almost safe to say that this speculative jeweller was about the only human being, with the

exception of Du Barry, who was in despair because Louis had died. His hope now lay with the next Louis, who, unfortunately for the jeweller, had no mistress upon whom he squandered millions. He showed the diamonds to Louis XVI. and to Marie Antoinette, but though they were dazzled with the beauty of the stones they were honest enough to know that they could not afford such glittering baubles. Bœhmer offered to let them pay on the instalment system, and Louis was tempted for the Queen's sake. But Marie Antoinette advised him against such extravagance, and the Court jeweller was given a decided refusal, which settled the matter as far as the King and Queen were concerned. Not for him, however, who was faced by ruin. He again sought the Queen, having access to the Court by virtue of his office, and on his knees, with much more than professional eagerness, besought the Queen to buy the necklace. She thought he was mad, and sternly told him so, sending him from her with a severe rebuke for his insolence. Months passed, and Marie Antoinette let the thought of the wretched necklace pass from her mind. But one day her waiting-woman, Madame Campan, came to her breathlessly with a story which brought back the glitter of those diamonds to the Queen's imagination with the lurid and horrid light of an *ignis fatuus*. Madame Campan had been dining at a friend's house where Bœhmer, who was a *bourgeois* of good standing, was also a guest. Knowing Madame Campan as the Queen's most confidential woman, he took her aside and anxiously inquired when the Queen would find it convenient to pay the next instalment. The waiting-woman was amazed. She knew the Queen owed him nothing on account of jewels, and told him so indignantly. Bœhmer turned pale. 'What! Do you not know?' he stammered. Then in incoherent words he mentioned the diamond neck-

lace—the Cardinal de Rohan—Madame Lamotte—words and names which plunged the Queen's woman into greater bewilderment and dismay. What was this amazing story? The Cardinal de Rohan had been commissioned to buy the necklace for the Queen! A low-class woman had been the go-between! The Queen had given assignations to a man she loathed! The diamond necklace was now in her possession! Incredible and impossible!

Poor Bœhmer, wretched dupe that he was, was horror-stricken at the thought of being duped. Madame Campan, more horror-stricken than he, rushed off to tell the tale to the Queen; and Marie Antoinette, when she heard it, saw before her a dark and horrible pit that some villain had dug for her.

The Cardinal de Rohan! A name she shuddered at. Already he had frightened her by a mad and mysterious behaviour, which had threatened to compromise her. The Cardinal, Prince de Rohan, a member of one of the most powerful families, and Grand Almoner of France, was a man of odious reputation, disgraced at the Court of Vienna, where he had been ambassador for two years, and recalled to France on account of the public scandal of his morals, too openly vile and profligate to be tolerated even in an age when looseness of morals was not strictly condemned by the world to princes of the Church. On account of his family influence and his high dignity, he could not be openly disgraced at the French Court, but both the King and Queen had intimated to him that they did not desire his presence. In spite of this he had been bold enough to thrust himself upon them at a public assembly. Worse still, he had dogged the Queen, with a mysterious persistency, actually bribing the porter of the lodge-gates to admit him to her private gardens, where he watched and waited for her, like some Satan in scarlet stockings. And now he dared to make

out, according to this infamous story of Bœhmer's, that she had permitted him to buy the diamond necklace, using as a go-between a low woman of notorious infamy, who had no place at Court, and whom the Queen had never seen. He dared to say—for thus Bœhmer had also said—that he held letters in the Queen's hand, commissioning him to make the purchase, and making secret assignations! The Queen was terrified. She saw the shadow of some frightful plot, enveloping her in a fog of evil mystery and intrigue. Wisely she went straight to the King, but he not so wisely perhaps summoned the Baron de Breteuil and the chamberlain of the household to help in deciding what steps should be taken to expose the plot and punish the evil-doers. De Breteuil hated the Cardinal de Rohan, and was hot to take him red-handed in his guilt. Knowing now the sensation of the scandal that followed and the dreadful harm it did to the Queen's good name, we may blame him for giving publicity to this affair. On the other hand, with Bœhmer to blab it to the world it might have been impossible to hush it up. The Prince de Rohan was arrested as he left the altar in the royal chapel, in his scarlet robes. He trembled when he was asked to explain the mystery, stammering and stuttering foolish, incoherent things, but confessing that he believed the Queen had wished him to buy the necklace, that he had believed it was in his possession, and that he held some private letters from the Queen written to him in her own hand. One of them was produced. It was signed 'Marie Antoinette de France.' 'Surely,' said Louis, sternly and incredulously, 'as a cardinal and prince you know that the Queens of France sign their Christian names only. The thing is a forgery on the face of it!' The Cardinal was kept under arrest, but he was cool enough to persuade the foolish young officer who had charge of him to let him scribble

a note and send it to a trusty friend. It was an order to burn all his papers! Thus, when the officers of police came to set seals on the Cardinal's correspondence they found a mass of ashes in the firegrate. Madame Lamotte, who was also arrested, had also had time to burn some incriminating documents. But under cross-examination the truth came out. With the audacity and ingenuity of a criminal genius, aided by a ruffian who called himself her lover, she had obtained possession of the diamond necklace by duping the Court jeweller, that the Queen was in love with the Cardinal de Rohan and had commissioned him to buy it, and that she, being in the Queen's confidence, had been made the go-between. Not this only. With equal audacity and almost incredible success she had thrown dust in the Cardinal's eyes. He, a debauchee and egoist, was asked to believe, and did believe, that the Queen regarded him with eyes of desire. Lamotte forged letters which he, like Shakespeare's Malvolio, read with feverish delight, believing them to be the secret expressions of love from the Queen herself. Lamotte went so far as to engage a low-class actress to impersonate Marie Antoinette, and she conversed with the wretched dupe from behind a curtain, giving him her hand to kiss. A drama that the devil must have laughed over with fiendish chuckles, if the devil has a sense of humour and may be allowed to exist by a charitable world for the sake of argument. But it was a tragedy without laughter for the Queen. The Cardinal de Rohan, placed upon his trial, gave mysterious and subtle replies which further endangered her reputation and increased the excitement of the jackals. His family stood by him; the Church protested against the arrest of a Cardinal at the altar steps. When temporal and spiritual powers are in league to save a villain justice goes to a dark place. The Cardinal was acquitted by his

judges ; only, however, by a small majority of votes. Perhaps, after all, he was more dupe than knave, though a fool sometimes deserves the gallows. It was the woman Lamotte who paid the penalty, and she really deserved her punishment, though not alone. There was a horrid and sickening scene when the officers of the law came to her apartments. She fought like a wild cat, and struggled with dreadful frenzy, but they had no mercy, and the clothes were torn off her back so that the branding-iron might do its work. It was badly done, and the writhing back was scarred all down instead of with the neat imprint of the *fleur de lys*. The wretched creature fled from France to London, where she got into debt, and lived in terror of being dragged back to France for some new form of torture. Eventually she threw herself out of window, terrified by a banging at the door, of creditors, whom she took to be agents of police from the French Government. The only person who seems to have gained anything but shame and retribution from the intrigue of the diamond necklace was Lamotte's lover, for whose sake the whole plot had been conceived. As soon as the diamonds had come into his hands he was shrewd enough to divide them and sell them in the thieves' markets of Europe. It is quite probable that even he did not get much out of the business, and that he was afraid to claim the money due from the Jew merchants of Hamburg and other cities. Where are those diamonds now ? Somewhere they must be, yet one cannot but think of giving play to the superstition which somewhere lurks in all hearts, that those fatal jewels would scorch any fair breast upon which they might be laid.

It has been said that the Queen's character was changed by this terrible little drama. It is not an exaggeration. From that time she was suspicious of plots, and, as the Prince

de Ligne says in a gallant eulogy of her, 'scented an intrigue from afar.' Among the French people her reputation was irretrievably wounded. They did not know the facts as we know them. The affair was mysterious, and suggestive of many evil things. The Cardinal had been acquitted, but at least, among those who had no personal knowledge of the Queen, there seemed good evidence that he had been her lover.

From that time Marie Antoinette forgot her gaiety and her beautiful youthfulness of heart. France was in a troubled and a sad condition, and gradually all those liberal ideas that had been launched quietly in philosophical treatises and discussed lightly in intellectual salons became concentrated into a force which moved a nation, not upon the surface, but from the depths. The doctrine of liberty had permeated downwards from the philosophers to the people. Hunger had made many disciples. There were two facts which thrust themselves rudely upon the Court—the Government and the aristocrats. The national finances were so rotten that bankruptcy loomed close. The people were so desperate in their poverty and hunger that revolution was not impossible. Versailles was not a Court of effervescent gaiety when the year of 1789 came to mark a new era in the history of Europe.

CHAPTER II

THE PHILOSOPHERS

THE French Revolution began, not in the cottages of the people, but in the salons of the nobles and the intellectuals. The people toiled, and were robbed of the fruit of their toil, with but a sullen discontent at a hard Fate made up of taxes and tolls, privileged orders and feudal laws. Whether this discontent would have gradually smouldered in the hearts of the people until it blazed out in an all-consuming fire is doubtful if it had not been for the wave of free thought, set in motion by Voltaire and his disciples, which swept across the nation during the eighteenth century and kindled those latent sparks into a general conflagration. This destructive criticism of old-time institutions, these ideals of the liberty of the individual, began at the top of society and spread downwards. Paradoxical as it may seem, it was the aristocrats who overthrew the aristocracy, the liberalism of the *Ancien Régime* which gave the people the power of casting off its fetters.

Parisian society in the middle of the eighteenth century was divided into several coteries in which the new ideas germinated and developed. It was generally some lady of noble rank and charm of manner who became the centre of attraction, round which gathered a crowd of philosophers and poets, wits and courtiers, who vied with each other in homage to their hostess, and in the brilliance and audacity of their personality. The age was a second Renaissance of

thought and learning, when wit was worth more than wealth, when to be dull was more offensive than to be vicious, and when a new philosophy covered a multitude of sins. Beauty was a queen to be worshipped only if she had wit, and Mrs. Grundy might go hang if she were stupid as well as plain. Love, Learning, and License was the motto of French society in those days, which preceded the watchwords of the people, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.'

The art of society has been lost since the days of the Revolution. We have dinner-parties and 'at homes,' but we have not society as it was in those salons of the *Ancien Régime*. They were not assemblages of acquaintances gathered together haphazard for chit-chat or conviviality, but circles where a select number of friends met day after day in closest intercourse, where they discussed subjects that lay nearest to their hearts, where each one strove to add to the enjoyment of the company by giving the best of his intellect, where wit clashed against wit, and learning was illuminated by charm of manner, where flashes of genius were not infrequent, and a certain level of intellect was demanded.

Such a circle was that which assembled at the house of Baron d'Holbach, who, on account of his hospitality and jovial manners, was called by the Abbé Galiani the *maître d'hôtel* of philosophy. Born at Heidelsheim in 1723, he had come at an early age to Paris, where he resided during the remainder of his life. Round his table gathered the most eminent thinkers of the day, and the conversation that flowed fast and furious at these *petits soupers* was the concentrated philosophy which, though they knew it not at the time, was to sweep away the old order and to establish a new era. Paul Heinrich Dietrich, Baron d'Holbach, was himself one of the most destructive critics of old creeds. His work, 'The System of Nature,' attacked not only Christianity but every

form of revealed religion. He was a materialist to the core, and by an investigation of the origins of virtue and vice, and by a survey of social and savage life, maintained, among other things, that self-interest is the one power which dominates human life, and that the idea of God has been created out of a superstition fostered by priests and kings. Yet, in spite of this gross atheism and religion of selfishness, Holbach was in his personal character singularly unselfish and lovable. Madame Geoffrin, whose salon was much frequented by the Baron's own circle, summed him up as 'a man simply simple.' Witty, frank, hearty, and courteous, no man in Paris was more popular among men of thought. 'Here,' wrote Diderot, one of his most remarkable guests, 'we dine well and lengthily. We talk of art, of poetry, of philosophy, and of love, of the greatness and vanity of our own enterprises, of gods and kings, of space and time, of death and of life.' The men who discoursed in such exalted strain were the most daring intellects of France, and sometimes in the heat of debate, perhaps also in the heat of wine, things would be said that would even startle and horrify some of the guests themselves. One of them, the Abbé Morellet, a man of by no means a tender conscience, reported that 'they say things to make a thunderbolt strike the house a hundred times, if it struck for that.' D'Alembert and Rousseau, two of the most advanced philosophers of the day, men who had been the advance-guard of revolutionary thought, were not able to tolerate the extreme philosophy propagated at that dinner table, and eventually withdrew from Baron d'Holbach's circle.

There was one man not in Paris—exiled, indeed, from France—who did not sit at that table, but whose ghost was always there grinning over the shoulders of the guests, and animating them to their wildest words. It was the ghost

of an old man, with a death's-head face, the pallid skin drawn tightly over the cheek-bones, the sunken eyes gleaming from their sockets with the fire of a sardonic humour. It was François Arouet, called Voltaire, the philosopher of destructive criticism, the caricaturist of life's ironies. He, from his exile at Cirey, in Switzerland, was the master-mind of intellectual France, the very humorous and rather horrible spirit which put a madness into the brains of men and women so that they became, involuntarily, the destroyers of their own society. It is amazing now, in the light of after events, that Royalists and nobles should have gone to Cirey, as to the shrine of a saint, to hear that wizened old man philosophise, with his queer, perpetual grin, over the evils of their own class ; that they should have kissed his withered hand and shed tears of emotion as he lay back in his tub-like chair denouncing and satirising a society of which they were the representatives, and destroying with his light, subtle irony beliefs which, if they were no longer believed, would drag these people to the dust. There must have been something amazingly magnetic about the old man when such a friend of royalty and class distinction as the Prince de Ligne—one among the thousands who visited him—was filled with enthusiasm for ' the sublime, simple, gay, and interesting things that came incessantly from him.' ' I talked,' says the Prince, ' only to make him talk ; I laughed or I wondered and admired ; I was intoxicated ! Even to his wrong sentiments, his false knowledge, his infatuations, his want of taste for the fine arts, his caprices, his pretensions to be a statesman, or profound and learned, almost to the point of being dull and a bore (which he could never be), all was charming, novel, piquant, unexpected.' The Prince de Ligne, insatiably inquisitive about this strange being, climbed a tree to gaze in upon his bedroom as the old man lay writing,

and laughed consumedly when he gave a sudden hiccough, 'more like a mason than a poet.' There was often this humorous side to the visits of his admirers. They were not unwilling to laugh at his vanities and eccentricities, but they were all 'intoxicated' by his biting wit and grim irony, and they went back to Paris, or elsewhere, to spread the destructive theories which in time were to work their own ruin.

The career of Voltaire was one long preparation for the revolution which he did not live to see. Like every other writer that ever lived, he was the product of his time. He came at a period of history when the old Catholic religion was losing its hold upon the love and reverence of the French people; when the high dignitaries of the Church violated their vows with an easy indifference; when, after long centuries of religious oppression an intellectual upheaval threatened to break every bond of religious restraint in its strivings for the freedom of the soul. All the old ideas of medievalism—broken often enough in the Middle Ages, but still the great ideals which dominated the imagination of men—the intense reverence for purity, the belief in a beneficent and self-revealing Deity, the law of self-sacrifice and bodily asceticism—were scorned and ridiculed. The upper classes considered morality a very good thing for the poor ignorant masses, and lived an absolutely non-moral life, in which religion was merely an excellent topic for jest and controversy. The poor people themselves, desperately struggling to preserve their species, began to wonder whether there was a God after all, and whether they had not got the worst of the bargain in putting their faith in so gentle, self-abnegating a creed as Christianity, with troublesome virtues that did not seem to pay, and with promises which in the people's misery did not seem to be fulfilled. They had begun

to wonder indeed whether it would pay better to have done with God and try the Devil's own game.

Then Voltaire was born, with qualities by which Fate marked him out as a man of destiny. These qualities, I think, are at their worst a strange delight in the witticisms of obscenity, a strange tendency to the brutalities of intellect, a rather cruel pleasure in the shafts of satire with poisoned points; and at their best an extraordinary truthfulness of vision in the contemplation of human nature and abstruse problems, an exceptional power of exposing the sham and the false, a genius for subtle discrimination and balancing of judgment, a freedom from the prejudices and conventionalities of thought, a noble desire for intellectual liberty, a noble hatred of intellectual tyranny.

Voltaire started young as a sceptic. Born in 1694, François-Marie Arouet, to give him his true name, had as his godfather a certain Abbé de Châteauneuf, who was a type of those witty, frivolous, society-loving, loose-living churchmen who scandalised the pious and amused the impious.

It is not surprising that under his influence young Arouet should soon have been tempted to ridicule the doctrines of revealed religion. He got into trouble at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, where he was educated by Jesuits, and leaving, at the age of seventeen, proceeded to study law. But, like many men of letters, he soon became disgusted by this dry-as-dust profession and plunged into the wild gaieties and idle companionship of a notorious association of noblemen and young bloods called the 'Society of the Temple.' His parents, alarmed at his mode of life, packed him off to the Hague as a secretary to the Marquis de Châteauneuf, the brother of his irreverent godfather. He quickly got into disgrace, however, and was promptly sent back. He then began to dabble in literature, and burnt his fingers at the

outset somewhat badly. He had the audacity to write a scurrilous lampoon revealing the private life of that infamous person, the Duc d'Orléans, who had become Regent on the death of Louis XIV.

It was a dangerous thing in those days, when a *lettre de cachet* could send a man to a dungeon without trial or sentence, where he might rot to death without hope of escape. Young Arouet paid the penalty of his rashness by being hurried off to the grim Bastille, and was lucky in being released at the end of a year. His term of imprisonment was not, however, unprofitably spent, for during the long, lonely hours he finished the drama of 'Œdipe,' which was afterwards a triumphant success when played in Paris, and commenced his great epic poem of 'Henri le Grand.' But he had not learnt wisdom, and soon after regaining his liberty he again became an inmate of the Bastille, in consequence of a quarrel with an influential nobleman named the Chevalier de Rohan Chabot, who caused him to be maltreated by some hired ruffians, and then obtained a *lettre de cachet* to consign him once more to the fortress of revenge. He was liberated at the instance of powerful friends on condition that he went to England, and in 1726, having now adopted the name of Voltaire, by which he was henceforth known, he made his appearance in London.

His renown as a wit and a man of letters gave him an immediate introduction to the best circles of English society, and he became a friend of Bolingbroke, Chesterfield, and Peterborough, and other patrons of letters, by whom he was taken into the company of writers and poets like Thomson, Gay, and Pope.

These three years which he spent in England had a profound effect upon his character and opinions. He became a diligent student of English literature, science, and philo-

sophy. The works of Shakespeare filled him with new ideas of dramatic art and gave him a broader outlook upon human nature. Locke enchanted him by his genius of common-sense and his philosophy of thinking. Pope gave him new weapons of satire. Sir Isaac Newton revealed to him the immensity and mystery of the universe. He was a keen observer also of English social and political life, which he contrasted in its principles of liberty and democracy with the tyranny and social injustice of his own country.

Upon his return to France he made use of these experiences and studies in a series of 'Letters on the English,' but his praise of the traditional enemies of France, and his comparisons so little favourable to the vanities and principles of his own people, brought down upon him a storm of abuse and deeply offended Louis XV. and his Court. Once again he had to seek safety in flight, and this time he took refuge at Cirey in Champagne with a woman who was to be his most intimate comrade, his critic, consoler, and divinity for twenty years. This was the famous Madame du Châtelet, a lady of great charm and wit, and extraordinary force of character.

'She was to him,' says Mr. John Morley in his admirable critical biography, 'that important and peculiar influence which, in one shape or another, some woman seems to have been to nearly every foremost man. In Voltaire's case this influence was not the rich and tender inspiration with which women have so many a time sweetened the lives and glorified the thought of illustrious workers, nor was he bound to her by those bonds of passion which have often the effect of exalting the strength and widening the range of the whole of the nature that is susceptive of passion. Their inner relations hardly depended on anything more extraordinary or more delicate than the sentiment of a masculine friendship. Voltaire found in the

divine Emily a strong and active head, a keen and generous admiration for his own genius, and an eagerness to surround him with the external conditions most favourable to that steady industry which was always a thing so near his own heart. "They are two great men, one of whom wears petticoats," said Voltaire of her and of Frederick the Great.'

At Cirey Voltaire accomplished a prodigious amount of work. Drama, philosophy, poetry, and history received many lasting additions from his pen. As an historian he won his way to the first rank by his 'History of Charles XII.,' his 'Epoch of Louis XIV.,' and 'The Morals and Character of Nations.'

Some years later he regained the favour of the French Court, but not for long. His outspoken courage and irrepressible gift of satire offended the Court party, and he had again to go into exile. He and Madame du Châtelet became the honoured guests of Stanislaus, ex-King of Poland, who maintained a brilliant little court at Lunéville.

This was the happiest time of Voltaire's life, and he became the leader of a little circle of wits and charming women, who spent their days in acting the plays he wrote for them and reciting his poems. His Oriental tales, in which, under the thin disguise of fiction, he satirised the people, manners, and institutions of his time, were read with avidity even by the people they caricatured, and he became recognised as the most powerful and original thinker of his nation and time. The death of Madame du Châtelet broke up those busy and happy days, and Voltaire accepted the invitation of Frederick the Great, who had long been his admirer, to the office of King's Chamberlain at Berlin.

But, as was inevitable with a man of Voltaire's plainness of speech and independence of character, he eventually quarrelled with Frederick and had to leave Berlin. He

settled down at a little place called Ferney, near Geneva; but even here he did not find peace, for at this time the Catholic Church was organising a campaign against infidelity and free thought, and certain philosophical works of Voltaire and other advanced thinkers were ordered to be burnt by the public executioner. This was the spark needed for the explosion of Voltaire's mental gunpowder, and he declared war against the Church, which he nicknamed 'L'Infâme,' 'The Infamous.'

It was a literary warfare carried on single-handed by Voltaire, with a bitterness, a violence, and an energy which can never cease to be an astounding chapter in the history of letters. Voltaire had a perfect command of polished and venomous satire, an amazing gift of destructive argument, an absolute and burning conviction in the law of intellectual liberty, a violent abhorrence of the supernatural. It is no wonder therefore that at a time when Christianity in France was already being attacked by a universal scepticism he should have shaken the edifice of the French Church to its very foundations, and established a reign of atheism over the people.

Voltaire was not himself an atheist, but believed in what he called a natural deism, a certain mysterious and controlling influence of but vague metaphysical existence. Not a very consoling religion, this deism, as Morley says again:

'Are you going to convert the new barbarians of our western world with this fair word of emptiness? Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear like the moaning of a midnight sea; will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with

fresh joy of battle, by the thought of a being without intelligible attributes, a mere abstract creation of metaphysic, whose mercy is not as our mercy, nor his justice as our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men ? '

But what France wanted at that epoch was not so much consolation as an inspiration for destruction and revenge, a force to blind them to the light of charity, and to nerve them to annihilation of existing institutions and of existing creeds. Before setting up a new building it is necessary to pull down the old one, and Voltaire's onslaught upon 'revealed' religion was one of the engines of destruction which composed the battery of the French Revolution, though he did not live to see the result of his own work.

It was in 1778, after an exile of thirty-four years, that Voltaire, then an old man of eighty-four, returned to his beloved Paris, upon the death of Louis XV., to see the performance of his last tragedy. It was then that the world realised the prodigious influence of this man upon his nation. He was received by the Parisians with a very delirium of enthusiasm. When he went to the Comédie Française and sat there with his death's-head face crowned with laurels, it was hours before the tremendous applause subsided, when the nobles and littérateurs of France clapped the judge who had condemned them to the guillotine. So great was the excitement of the old man himself that it may truly be said he was killed by enthusiasm, being taken ill and laid upon his bed of death soon after his crowning triumph.

Such was the man, then, whose spirit of irony and smiling malignity against the falsehoods of life sat at the board of Baron d'Holbach and of other philosophic hosts in Paris, moving the men of the salons to utter words of madness which sometimes shocked the lips that spoke them.

It was Diderot perhaps who seconded the Baron's wildest

attacks upon conventionality. He it was who had founded the great 'Encyclopædia,' the engine of war that first battered against the barriers of conservatism. Denis Diderot had not lived the life of a man likely to reverence tradition or convention. The son of a sword cutler at Langres, where he was born in 1713, he had been sent to a Jesuit school and afterwards to Paris, to the Collège d'Harcourt. After two years' training his father thought it time to start him on the business of life, and offered him a choice between medicine and the law. Young Denis thought medicine was licensed poisoning, and law licensed swindling, so that he would adopt neither. 'Very well,' said Père Diderot, 'make your own bed and lie on it.' Like a good many others who make their own bed, Denis found his terribly full of bumps. He had no other capital than a good education—alas, how poor a stock-in-trade! He tried to get his bread and butter by teaching, but very often there was no butter, and sometimes no bread. There were days when he got up hungry and went to bed starving; days when he roamed the streets of Paris like a famished dog prowling for any filthy food. Once a meal was given to him by a kind-hearted woman who saw that he was starving. The food filled his stomach and warmed his heart. He swore in his fulness that if ever he, Denis Diderot, saw brighter days, he would never refuse an alms to any poor wretch, nor help to condemn him to such an agony. There are many who have made similar vows but failed to keep them. It is to Diderot's honour that he was an exception to the majority.

But it was many a day still before the young philosopher saw fortune smile. Instead, with a reckless daring, he gave hostages to Fortune, for, poor as he was, he married. Poor Antoinette Champion, a pretty seamstress, was chosen for the sacrificial altar. Alas, there was no need for poverty to

come in at the door. It was installed already, and Love flew out of the window more quickly than usual. Diderot was a genius, and geniuses are not as a rule made for domestic bliss. There were quarrels, frequent and bitter. Antoinette slaved and saved, but could not give her husband that intellectual companionship he began to crave for. It was eighteenth-century France, and the marriage bond was not so rigid then as now—even as now in France! Diderot was unfaithful, and Antoinette Champion was heart-broken.

By degrees Diderot forced himself into literary notoriety. He lampooned a Court favourite, and was sent to languish in the fortress of Vincennes. Fortunately Voltaire rescued him, and as a three months' prisoner on parole in the woods of Vincennes he met with Rousseau, in whose company he learnt to hate society, civilisation, and every form of barrier to the unrestrained liberty of the individual. Antoinette and the child that had been born to them returned to the old home at Langres, and Diderot made absence the grave of love. He became devoted to a Madame Puisieux and remained her slave for several years, until he, unfaithful, was astounded and horrified to find her faithless. But he consoled himself later with Mademoiselle Voland, a financier's daughter, to whom he was attached until her death in 1774.

He had now become more notorious on account of his 'Philosophic Thoughts,' which was publicly burnt by order of the Parliament of Paris in 1746, and suffered another period of imprisonment for opinions expressed in his 'Letter on the Blind.' But Fortune's wheel at last turned in his favour. Le Breton, an enterprising publisher, appointed him as editor of an Encyclopædia which he proposed to issue. No such work existed in French, and Le Breton's original intention was to translate and adapt the English publication of Ephraim Chambers. But under the editorship of Denis

Diderot the work was designed on entirely new lines. It numbered among its contributors the most learned scholars, the most brilliant intellects of France, and it became the organ of the new philosophy. For twenty years Diderot faced a furious opposition with unflinching courage. Prosecution was threatened time and again, the sale was more than once prohibited, the editor and his contributors were in peril of the Bastille or exile; but the force of the 'Encyclopædia' was prodigious, and few literary works in the history of the world have had such far-reaching effect. It is not too much to say that it was one of the chief causes which led to the Revolution. Diderot never thought of his skin when he handled his pen. As an example of his audacious utterances may be cited his interpolation in Abbé Raynal's history of the Two Indies. 'Until a king is dragged to Tyburn with no more pomp than the meanest criminal, the people will have no conception of liberty. The law is nothing unless it be a sword suspended over all heads without distinction, and levelling all which elevate themselves above the horizontal plane in which it circles.'

Strangely enough, this revolutionary genius was one of the victims to that craze of sentimentalism which began to pervade French society at this period. The works of the novelist Richardson, 'that sublime genius,' as Diderot enthusiastically called him, were read, quoted, and wept over by all who professed intellectual culture, and the trials and tribulations of that sentimental and wholly impossible young woman, Clarissa Harlowe, stirred to the depths the hearts of men who would have rejoiced to see a king 'dragged to Tyburn.' One day a friend questioned Diderot about some private trouble, but the philosopher could only testify his emotion by broken exclamations of 'Oh Pamela! Oh Clarissa! My friends! Oh Richardson!' This worship

of the sentimental Richardson was indulged in to an extravagant degree by the fair sex. Diderot's friend, Madame de Tessé, on a visit to England, was conducted to Saint Bride's church by Richardson's son-in-law, and there shown the grave of that renowned author. In an ecstasy of emotion she fell upon her knees before the hallowed shrine, and shed such a passion of tears that her conductor was alarmed lest she should fall in a swoon at his feet. Indeed, he was so startled by this exuberance of emotion that he was chary in future of exhibiting his relative's last resting-place to French ladies of so much sensibility.

Diderot's subeditor and one of Baron d'Holbach's coterie was Jean le Rond d'Alembert. He was the offspring of aristocracy and the foster son of the people. On November 16, 1717, a poor glazier's wife, who had been saying her beads in the church of St. Jean le Rond, found, on her exit, a newborn babe, half dead from exposure, lying upon the steps. It was the illegitimate son of Madame de Tencin and the Chevalier Destouches, but to the woman of the people it was but an infant after the image of the child Jesus, and she took it to her bosom. This good dame's name, curiously enough, was Rousseau, and she brought up the child as her own son. Years after, when this same child had become one of the greatest men in Europe, Madame de Tencin was proud to claim her motherhood to him. But he disowned her with the proud words : ' I am the son of the glazier's wife.'

D'Alembert was a natural genius. He was born with a passion for geometry. His natural father (unknown to the boy) provided his foster-mother with money to pay for his education at the Collège Mazarin, where he learnt all the mathematics that the professors could teach. Upon returning to his humble home he continued his studies there for thirty years. ' You will never be anything but a philosopher,'

said matter-of-fact Madame Rousseau, 'and a philosopher is only a madman who makes his life miserable in order that people may talk about him after he is dead.' But D'Alembert smiled, and continued his philosophy. At the age of twenty-three he was admitted to the Academy of Sciences, and year by year he produced works upon the deepest problems of mathematics which carried that science to almost its present limits, and established his reputation in Europe. Then came his connection with Diderot and the 'Encyclopædia.' For this work he wrote the famous 'Preliminary Discourse,' a profoundly eloquent tribute to the advancement of learning, and he contributed numerous articles throughout the volumes.

Though he worked with Diderot he was of widely different character. In contrast to the wild license of his editor, he was austere, reverent, and restrained. The tenderest side of his character was his devotion to Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse, one of the leaders of the salons. This lady had not much personal beauty, but her vivacity and keen wit made up for her plainness of face. She first attracted the attention of D'Alembert as a reader to that witty, wicked old woman, Madame du Deffand, whose scandalous stories of Louis XV.'s Court and the biting humour with which she spiced her gossip were a constant amusement to the frequenters of her salon. Selfish and tyrannous to her attendant, she little dreamed that Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse was attracting the notice of her company. But one day, upon getting up earlier than usual, she was horrified to discover her reading woman surrounded by a group of admirers in warmest converse—none other than D'Alembert and his fellow-philosophers whom the old lady considered her own particular property. The shocking discovery was made that Mdlle. de l'Espinasse had been in the habit of holding a morning

salon of this kind in the apartments of her mistress. In a terrible passion Madame du Deffand dismissed her audacious attendant. But this action only led to the wholesale desertion of her own coterie, and under the sheltering friendship of D'Alembert Mdlle. de l'Espinasse founded a separate salon, which was one of the most favoured of that period. Her early death wounded D'Alembert to the heart, and darkened his career. He found consolation in his work and was never idle. A sturdy, independent soul had this scholar, caring nothing for wealth or the luxuries that wealth brings. Frederick II. of Prussia wished to make him President of the Berlin Academy, but he preferred the little house of Maman Rousseau. Katherine of Russia, that generous patron of poets and philosophers, entreated him to superintend the education of her son, at a salary of 100,000 francs, and when he declined, wrote to him with the plea that his refusal to contribute to the education of a whole nation was not in accordance with his own principles. Nor did she rest here, for, realising that it would be hard for him to break off his old friendships, she invited him to bring all his friends with him and she would provide for them all they could desire. But D'Alembert was not to be tempted by any offer from the only city in which he could feel at home, and at Paris therefore he remained.

To Baron d'Holbach's *petits soupers* came another man, on rare occasions—the man who wrote the gospel of the new philosophy which was permeating all ranks of society. With a strong strain of morbidity that made him mad at last, consumed by vanity and an hysterical self-consciousness, but illuminated by a genius which gave him the gift of prophecy, and acutely sensitive to a heart which throbbed and thrilled to the sufferings of humanity, with a passion of sentimentality for primitive ideals contrasting with a passion

of hate against wealth and privilege and the tyranny of caste, there was never a stranger creature born of woman than Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is the fashion to laugh now at the absurdities of his impracticable idealism, to sneer at his exaggerated egotism, and to sicken at his moral weaknesses and at the disgusting candour of his confessions of physical vice. Nevertheless, if, with a full sense of the natural depravity of the human heart and an adequate allowance for the vanity which so often accompanies the most exalted genius, we judge Jean-Jacques Rousseau by his work and by his influence upon the modern world, he stands apart from his fellow men as an inspired being—as the great teacher of natural laws and natural wisdom in an age of decadent civilisation rotting at the core because its roots were planted in the soil of corruption and cruelty. The man himself was something of a fool, and in his younger days very much of a lout. But in spite of his foolishness, due not a little to a shy and sensitive nature too easily thrilled by the unkind fingers of Fate which had jarred the harmony of his heart, and in spite of his loutishness, due wholly to the sullen suspicion of a weak animal towards beasts of prey, there was revealed in him the tenderness, the wistfulness, the noble passion of a poet ; the sublimely simple faith of a prophet who sees the futility of life's inessentials and throws aside the superstitions and social structures of civilised humanity to show the silent and uncomplicated machinery of nature's scheme ; the divine rage of the reformer at powers of evil proclaimed as righteousness, and crushing the good in men and women.

How he came by such a soul, and by what motive power he was impelled to such philosophy, is one of those mysteries which baffle the reason. His father was one Isaac Rousseau, a Genevan Protestant, watchmaker by trade, and a selfish,

sensual, though not a coarse man by nature. Left a widower with two sons, he concentrated his affection on the younger, Jean-Jacques, little caring when the other ran away to escape a beating and from that date was never heard of again.

Rousseau, in his 'Confessions,' has drawn a delightful picture of the days when he, a child of seven, and his father, a dreamer in full manhood, sat close together while one or the other read out aloud the romances of old, hour by hour through the night, until often the matins of the birds outside the window summoned them from the land of dreams to the everyday world of work. 'Sometimes my father, hearing the swallows at dawn, said to me in a shamefaced way, "Let us go to bed; I am more of a child than thou."'

'In a little while I acquired, by this dangerous method, not only an extreme facility of reading and of understanding, but an intelligence, unique for my age, regarding the passions. I had no idea of things, but I already knew the meaning of every sentiment. I had experienced nothing, I had felt everything. These confused emotions, which came to me one after another, did not affect the reasoning power which I had not yet attained; but they formed my character in another way, and gave me quaint and fanciful notions of human life of which experience and reflection have hardly been able to cure me.

'The novels finished with the summer of 1719. The following winter we had something different. My mother's library was exhausted; we had recourse to a part of her father's, which we had avoided. Fortunately there were some good books in it, and that could hardly have been otherwise, this library having been formed by a clergyman, a typical one, and even a *savant*, but a man of taste and spirit. The "History of the Church and of the Empire" by Le Sueur, Bossuet's "Discourse on Universal History,"

Plutarch's famous "Lives," the "History of Venice" by Nani, Ovid's "Metamorphoses," La Bruyère, the "Races" of Fontenelle, his "Dialogues of the Dead," and some volumes of Molière, were carried to my father's little room, and I read them to him every day while he worked. From these books I developed a rare and perhaps unique taste at this age. Plutarch above all became my favourite reading. The pleasure I took in reading him over and over again cured me a little of novels, and I soon preferred Agesilaus, Brutus, and Aristides to Orondates, Artamenes, and Juba. From these interesting readings, and from the conversations they caused between my father and me, was formed this liberal and republican spirit, this indomitable and proud character, impatient of yoke and servitude, which has tormented me during the whole course of my life in situations the least convenient for giving rein to it. Incessantly taken up with Rome and Athens, living, so to speak, with these great men, born myself the citizen of a Republic, and son of a father whose patriotism was his strongest passion, I believed myself Greek or Roman, and actually became the personage whose life I was perusing; upon reading instances of constancy and courage which impressed me my eyes sparkled and my voice became strong. One day, when I read out at table the adventure of Scævola, they were terrified to see me go forward and hold my hand over a chafing dish to represent his action.'

But these times of pleasant intellectual excitement did not last. In 1722 his father fled from the city to escape punishment for a tavern brawl, and little Jean-Jacques was left in the care of an uncle. At thirteen years of age he was apprenticed to an attorney, who quickly sent him away with the blunt verdict that he was a fool who would never do any good. After that he was handed over to an engraver, but with him

his life was a torture. The master was a tyrant, and made the sensitive lad stupid, vicious, and cowardly from fear. He became a liar and a thief, and at last, terrified at an expected chastisement for a trivial offence, ran away, as his brother had done, hoping to find more mercy in the great world. In his 'Confessions,' that amazing autobiography in which he dissected his own soul and laid it all bare and quivering, with all its vice and frailty as well as its poetry and genius exposed nakedly to the reader, Rousseau has told the story of his experiences. Taken in and provided for by a priest of Savoy who was eager to convert any Protestant heretics, he was afterwards given an introduction from his protector to a certain lady at Annecy named Madame de Warens. This lady was separated from her husband, but with ample means of a somewhat mysterious character—it has been suggested with some probability that she was a political spy—she led an independent life, having a taste for many pursuits which kept her thoroughly if not well occupied. She had a *penchant* for chemistry and alchemy, her reputation in this way bringing to her door many charlatans who imposed upon her credulity, fed richly at her table, and swindled her of money. She had also a liking for commercial speculation and did a little gambling in stocks and shares with needy rascals who rooked her with an ease that must have seemed to them delightful. A Roman Catholic by sentiment and by some conviction, she indulged in theological speculation of a liberal and emotional kind which threatened her orthodoxy. She was fond of reading and had a more than ordinary knowledge of French and classical literature. Above all, she was fond of being loved, and with a real kindliness of nature did not find it difficult to obtain lovers, both masculine and feminine.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau found her adorable. When he

first saw her she was twenty-eight years of age, having been born with the century. 'She had those charms which do not fade because they belong more to the expression than to the features, and she was then in the first flush of her beauty. She had a tender and caressing air, a very sweet way of looking at one, an angelic smile, a mouth made to match my own, and mouse-coloured hair of an uncommon beauty, to which she gave a little untidiness with a very piquant effect. She was dainty in stature, short even, and had a slight stoop though without deformity; but it was impossible to see a more beautiful head, a more beautiful bosom, more beautiful hands, or more beautiful arms.' Rousseau himself was only sixteen when he met this lady of charms who was to be his 'dear mamma,' but looking back at his youth through the mists of memory he was not displeased with the picture that came to his mind's eye, as he appeared at that time. 'Without being what one calls a handsome fellow, I was pretty shapely in my small figure. I had a dainty foot, an elegant leg, a natural air, an animated countenance, a rosebud mouth, black hair and eyebrows, and eyes small and even sunken, but glowing with that fire with which my blood was consumed. Unfortunately I knew nothing of all that, and I never happened to think of my face in the whole course of my life until too late to take advantage of it. Also I had with the timidity of my youth the shyness of a very loving nature always troubled by the fear of making a bad impression. Moreover, in spite of having a sufficiently cultured mind, I had a total lack of manners, and my acquaintance, far from supplying that defect, only made me more nervous by letting me know how much I failed.'

Madame de Warens did not find him amiss. She took compassion on the shy, gawky youth, and having at that time, among her other hobbies, a taste for proselytising, gave

him a temporary shelter in her house, on condition that he should receive instruction as a Roman Catholic. Rousseau, facing starvation and excited by the adorable amiability of his pretty lady, was prepared to become anything she pleased. He was accordingly provided with a little money by his protectress and packed off to a kind of Catholic manufactory at Turin, where a great number of blackguards of all ages and races were being taught the blessings of Catholicism and receiving free food and shelter as the price of their conversion. Some of these wretches made a regular profession of the thing, travelling from one proselytising centre to another and being 'converted' time after time for the sake of a lazy life and free rations. Young Rousseau had a horrible experience, and his eyes were first opened to the foulness of human nature at its lowest strata of degradation. When he was duly 'baptised' and discharged with a few francs in his pocket he breathed deep sighs of relief at deliverance from a little hell. His subsequent adventures read very much like pages from 'Gil Blas.' He became the servant of a shopkeeper's wife, and in the intervals of attending to the drudgery he hated, cast sheep's eyes at the mistress, with whom he fell desperately in love, until her husband very wisely kicked him out of doors. He then became footman to the Comtesse de Vercellis, a noble lady in character as well as rank. Here he was seized with a sudden madness for a ribbon not worth twopence, which he stole for no purpose which he could himself explain. The theft was discovered, but to shield himself the culprit was cowardly enough to put the blame upon a fellow servant, a poor little maid who was so astounded at his bold lying that she appeared guilty to the master and mistress who interrogated her. Both the servants were discharged, and Rousseau from that day forth never ceased to lament the wretched baseness which had robbed an honest

girl of her character and sent her perhaps to a life of shame. It was the sin of a coward, but at least Rousseau had the courage in his old age to brand himself with the infamy of it. He was certainly honest in his 'Confessions,' if not always accurate.

After this episode, which burnt itself into his brain, Rousseau was taken into service by the Comte de Gouvon, whom he describes as a dignified and noble old man. While waiting at table he fell in love, as was only natural to him, with his master's daughter, and his emotions were so violent that he spilt a glass of water over her and behaved generally like an amorous luny. This, however, was forgiven when his master discovered his superior talents and education, and he was promoted to be secretary to a worthy abbé, the Count's nephew. Here he fell into disgrace by absurd petulance and arrogance, and was dismissed at length, as he richly deserved. He now had but one ambition, to return to his beloved 'maman,' to whom he was still devoted in spite of his dalliance with other loves. He was desolated to find her gone from Annecy, but he followed her to Chambéri and received a tender welcome when he threw himself at her feet and 'in a transport of joy' pressed her hand to his lips. 'My poor little one,' said the amiable lady, 'here thou art again, then! I knew well thou wast too young for this journey, but I am indeed pleased it has not turned out so badly as I had feared.' In the shelter of her house Rousseau again recovered his tranquillity and his happiness. 'From the first day the sweetest familiarity was established between us. . . . "Petit" was my name, "Maman" was hers, and we always remained "Petit" and "Maman" even when the number of years had nearly effaced the difference between us. I find that these two names give a marvellously good idea of our tone towards each other,

the simplicity of our manners, and above all the relation of our hearts. She was the most tender of mothers to me, never seeking her own pleasure but always my welfare; and if there was any sensuousness in my attachment for her it was not because I wished to change the nature of it, but only to make it more exquisite, to intoxicate myself with the charm of having a mamma so young and pretty that it was delicious to caress her. I say to caress, literally, because she never imagined that she should deprive me of the most tender and motherly kisses and caresses, and it never entered my heart to abuse them. It will be said that we had, in the end, relations of a different kind; I agree; but one must wait a little. I cannot tell everything at once.'

Rousseau was so candid about his own lapses from the path of virtue that we may believe him when he says that his relations with Madame de Warens were at this time of an innocent and platonic character. He became her secretary, writing her letters, helping to keep her accounts, reading the masterpieces of French literature to her for hours at a time, and discussing theology, morality, and love with her in the intimacy of their charming companionship. Under her instruction he also learnt the rudiments of music, and she flattered him into the belief that he was destined to become a great composer. His egotism was so sublime that he did not doubt the prophecy, and he left his protectress for a while to become a professor of music at Lausanne, where he fell in love with most of his pupils, until, at a public concert which he endeavoured to conduct, his ignorance of instrumental music covered him with ridicule and shame. He fell into the direst poverty, and after many strange and pitifully absurd adventures struggled back once more to his *chère maman*. Madame de Warens again received him with tenderness, and together they moved from the house

at Chambéri to a rustic little retreat called Les Charmettes. Here for nearly four years Rousseau knew the greatest happiness of his life, and in a daily round of sweet tranquillity, amidst beautiful scenery which filled him with that love and knowledge of nature which was the cleanest and most wholesome passion of his strange heart, he lived through a pastoral idyll to which he looked back in after years as a dream of happiness and peace.

'Here begins the short happiness of my life,' he says, with a melancholy tenderness as he comes to the narrative of these blissful days, 'here come those peaceful but fleeting moments which have given me the right to say that I have lived. Precious and ever-to-be-regretted moments! Ah! begin for me once again your pleasant passage of time; pass by more slowly in my memory, if that be possible, than ye did in your real succession of fugitive seconds. What shall I do to drag out as much as I should like this simple and touching narrative; to say over and over again the same things and not to weary my readers by repeating to them that I was not wearied myself in doing them with humdrum repetition. If, indeed, all this could be described as facts, as actions, as words, I could describe it or give some kind of idea of it; but how can one say what was not said nor done, nor even thought, but tasted, felt? I got up with the sun, and I was happy; I went for a walk, and I was happy; I saw *maman*, and I was happy; I left her for a while, and I was happy; I explored the woods, the hills, I wandered through the valleys, I read, I was idle, I worked in the garden, I gathered fruits, I helped in the kitchen, and happiness followed me everywhere. It was not in any definite cause, it was centred in my own soul, and it could not leave me for a single instant.'

But such bliss was not to last. Rousseau's dear *maman*

wearied a little sooner of the idyll than the young man who had now enjoyed so long the beauties of her mind and body. The platonic affection which had formerly bound them together might have endured longer, but when she broke through the platonic contract and allowed him to be her real lover, passion took the place of sentiment, and with Madame de Warens passion was soon satiated, requiring change of circumstance. She took advantage of a temporary absence of her adorer to transfer her affections to a certain Vintzenried, whom Jean-Jacques describes as a journeyman wig-maker, ugly and a fool, who tyrannised over his mistress and swindled her with rascally audacity. In 1740 Rousseau quitted in disgust the house where he had passed his happiest hours, carrying away memories which are enshrined in the immortality of his 'Confessions.'

And now followed years of squalid vicissitude in which he tried to keep body and soul together by copying music at a few sous a day, and by hack literary work. Then he spent eighteen months in Venice as private secretary to the Ambassador, who finally kicked him out of doors for incompetence, so that he returned to Paris to resume his copying and to do the most foolish thing of all the foolish things in his life. Like Diderot, he committed the crowning folly of marrying a girl as impecunious as himself and immeasurably beneath him in intellect. Thérèse Le Vasseur was ugly and ignorant, vulgar and stupid; but, happier in this respect than Diderot, Rousseau imagined his wife to be divinely beautiful in body and soul. She bore him five children, and by his wish each in turn was abandoned to the charity of the foundling hospital. Such was the paternal conduct of the man who in that remarkable book 'Emile' instructed the world upon its duty to children and upon the true principles of education!

In 1749 he first came into public fame by a 'Discourse on Arts and Sciences,' in which he proclaimed with fierce denunciation that literature, art, science, and every form of culture were destructive of true morality. In 1753 he made a lucky hit with an opera entitled the 'Devin du Village,' which became immensely popular in Paris. In the same year appeared his 'Discourse on the Origin of Inequality,' in which he maintained that all distinctions of society and wealth were crimes against the rights of man, and that the only perfect state of existence was that of savages unfettered by the artificial decrees of civilisation.

Before this he had become acquainted with Grimm, a distinguished contributor to the 'Encyclopædia,' who introduced him to Diderot and Baron d'Holbach's circle. He was recognised as a genius of the first order, and Diderot was glad to make him a contributor to the great work. It was at this period that he was presented to Madame d'Epinay, the beautiful and witty lady whose salon was frequented by the most distinguished thinkers of the day. Francueil, a friend of Grimm, introduced him as 'a sorry devil of an author, who is as poor as Job but has wit and vanity enough for four.' Madame d'Epinay, however, was astounded by his genius and overlooked his vanity. 'He is a man,' she said, 'to whom one would raise altars. And the simplicity with which he relates his misfortunes! I have still a pitying soul. It is frightful to imagine such a man in misery.'

Madame d'Epinay had a heart made tender by bitter sorrow. Dedicated when still a child to the altar of a 'mariage de convenance,' she found herself wedded to a hog in human shape. Her husband was cruel, sensual, brutish, and prodigal. 'He squandered two millions,' said Diderot, 'without saying a good word or doing a good action.' His poor young wife, innocent, gentle, and sensitive, had all her

ideals and hopes of happiness rudely shattered. From great wealth she was plunged into extreme poverty, and the world seemed dark to her till Baron Grimm saw that behind the veil of her reserve there was a bright intellect and a tender heart. He pierced the gloomy clouds of her soul by his genial sunshine, and his friendship and chivalrous homage enabled her to found a salon which, though unpretentious in material luxuries, was yet favoured by the highest intellects of France.

Such was the woman over whom the strange character of Rousseau cast a spell. Seeing that he hated society, and was ill at ease in the company of men of fashion, she offered him a secluded cottage called 'The Hermitage,' on the outskirts of the forest of Montmorency and close to her château of La Chevrette. Having quarrelled in his morbid humours with Diderot, Grimm, and all his warmest admirers, he eagerly accepted the offer of this retreat, and retired there with his vulgar wife and her disagreeable mother. Here he managed to scrape together a meagre income of 60*l.* a year copying music, and devoted the rest of his time to the composition of his great romance 'La Nouvelle Héloïse.' It was inspired by a new infatuation he had formed for Madame d'Houdetot, the sister of Madame d'Epinay—'one of the ugliest women I ever saw,' writes Morris, the American Ambassador, 'even without her squint, which is of the worst kind'—and in the woods of Montmorency he conceived those passages of rapturous passion which inflamed the hearts of sentimental women and romantic men, and spread his fame throughout Europe.

Rousseau's dream of a 'state of nature' had a powerful effect on the imagination of men and women who lived in a wholly artificial society. They pretended, perhaps they really felt, a craving for simplicity, for pastoral pleasures

and the pure pursuits of country life. This was reflected in the literature, arts, and amusements of this period. Elegant shepherds and dainty shepherdesses, snow-white lambs and milk-white doves were depicted in poems, paintings, and plays; and courtiers and courtesans raved about this mimic rurality which was so very different from the squalid misery of the real thing. A story is told of the Duchesse de Mazarin who prepared a pretty pastoral effect for her guests one evening. Her spacious salon was fitted up with a number of mirrors, and these reflected at every angle a scene built up in one recess, representing a bower of sylvan beauty with luxuriant shrubs and flowers. Along a winding path a dainty soubrette from the opera, dressed as a shepherdess, was to appear, with dog and crook, leading a flock of snowy sheep, while soft melody added to the enchantment of the scene. A sheet of glass separated this scene from the ball-room, and the Duchesse de Mazarin, eager to surprise her guests with the effective tableau, was about to give the signal for the entry of the fair shepherdess when a terrible catastrophe produced a quite impromptu effect. The sheep suddenly broke loose from their confinement behind the scene and dashed through the thin glass into the salon. Terrified by the glare of the lights, and the reflections of the mirrors, they rushed about in mad confusion, knocking down fair dancers and trampling over them. The room resounded with the screams of ladies and the oaths of men, while the Duchess herself regarded the wild scene with horror and chagrin.

The sentimentalist Rousseau was one of the ficklest and most cantankerous of beings. In a passion of jealousy at the intimacy between Madame d'Epinay and his former friend Grimm, he left the Hermitage for a cottage at Montlouis, which was placed at his disposal by the generosity

of the Duc and Duchesse de Luxembourg. Here he wrote the most famous and the greatest of all his works, 'The Social Contract.' In this he was the first to proclaim the doctrine of liberty, equality, and fraternity, which stirred the hearts of the people like the voice of a new prophet. He maintained that the basis of society is an original compact by which the individual surrenders his will to the community for certain inalienable rights. It is a republic in which every one has an equal right to make laws, and no laws are valid except by consent of the whole people. Kings are usurpers, it is a crime to have wealth, the poor have a right to the fruits of their labour, the power is in the hands of the people. Such was the revolutionary doctrine elaborated in the most eloquent and most passionate language in 'The Social Contract.' To allow such writings to pass without censure was to admit the truth of their teaching, and the Parliament promptly ordered the arrest of the author and condemned his books to be burnt. Rousseau was terrified. He fled to Switzerland, and there was chivied by his own fears and misgivings from one place to another.

It was the historian David Hume who persuaded Rousseau to come to England, and he was such a devotee of the philosopher's works that he thought to live with him would be a continual delight. Though Baron d'Holbach warned him of Rousseau's cantankerous habits, he insisted on inviting him to his house. 'At first all went well; the English caressed him, the King protected him; he tolerated them all. His friends in Paris abandoned all their fears and pictured him and Hume in each other's arms.' One evening, when Baron d'Holbach presided at his *petit souper*, a letter was brought to him from Hume.

'My dear Baron,' it ran, 'Rousseau is a scoundrel! He has boxed my ears.'

Enclosed in the letter was a note from Rousseau to Hume beginning : ' You are a traitor ! You only brought me here to ruin me after dishonouring me ! '

' Just as I expected,' said Holbach briefly.

The sequel to this episode was Rousseau's publication of the whole correspondence relating to the quarrel, to which Hume replied with a detailed account. But to this day no one has fathomed the reason for this bitter controversy.

Upon leaving Hume, Rousseau was entertained for some months at Wootton, in Derbyshire, by a certain Mr. Davenport. But before long he suddenly left the place with Thérèse Le Vasseur, his reason being that the latter had quarrelled with ' Mr. Davenport's cook-maid who had dressed their dinner very ill, and at last had sprinkled ashes on their victuals.'

He was under the impression that the British Government was about to betray him and that he was continually dogged by spies. He also feared assassination, and, scourged by a hundred imaginary terrors, fled back to France. In a fifth story of a squalid lodging-house in Paris he eked out a miserable living as a copyist at ten sous a page and by sundry essays which were half mad, half full of genius. Seven years later a friend gave him the offer of a small cottage at Ermenonville, about twenty miles from Paris. Occasionally a little gem of literature, calm and beautiful and chaste in style, came from his pen, but his work as a rule was now uninteresting and incoherent. The poor, morbid wretch, already devoured by deadly melancholy, was made more miserable by the infidelity of his wife, and here, on July 2, 1778, he died so suddenly that his death suggested suicide.

In spite of all his weakness, his sentimentality, and delusions, Rousseau was a man of genius and a man of heart. He realised the rights of man when only the privileges of

class and wealth were acknowledged as the basis of society. He saw through the shams of an artificial civilisation, and yearned for a primitive simplicity of life. He hated tyranny of every kind, and believed in a perfect freedom restrained only by a respect for the common weal. Though his imagination never conjured up the effect of his own utterances and never caught a glimpse of those frightful revolutionary slaughters which were the natural sequence to his teaching, he believed that the happiness of humanity would never be attained until the abolition of class distinctions and until mankind returned to a state of nature.

Modern Socialists sneer at his 'Social Contract,' and indeed his scheme of an ideal society was based upon the unworkable hypothesis that mankind, uncorrupted by the disease of civilisation, is virtuous and sufficiently self-governed by the light of reason to need no laws. Rousseau's political economy is not in the text-books of to-day—perhaps modern political economy would be a little less devoid of humanity if it were—but when it first appeared in France the 'Social Contract' was the revelation of a new gospel and the prophecy of a new state of man. This book, produced by a shy, sullen, ill-mannered creature, who had seemed a boor to the smart salons of Paris and a half-crazed creature to those who had more wit than wisdom, shook the realm of France to its very foundations. Voltaire's irony and genius of sarcasm had destroyed men's faith in institutions that had been sacred and in dogmas that had been but half believed for many a long day. But Rousseau's idealism was a stronger force than Voltaire's darts of satire, his sentiment was infinitely seductive, his broad humanity and admirable simplicity converted men against themselves, so that nobles admitted the evil of their privileges and the false foundations of their power. It was a dangerous thing when Rousseau

made Liberals out of aristocrats. It was very dangerous when he made politicians out of the people. In many a little hamlet of France the young blacksmith, after his day's work, the young miller, or the young farmer would pore over 'La Nouvelle Héloïse,' spelling out the words, unashamed of the tears that dabbled the pages, and afterwards, with quickening pulse, would struggle through the 'Contrat Social,' but dimly understanding this difficult philosophy, yet understanding enough to know that it preached a gospel of liberty and equality for all men born of women, denouncing the power and wealth of those who did no work, and proclaiming the sovereign power of the people. The lawyer's clerk, the half-starved journalist, the small shopkeeper, the young priest read Rousseau and slept with his books beside their pillow. The tyranny of class, the cruelty of caste, the injustice and inequalities of life, the splendid vice of the nobility, the wretched squalor of the poor, became revealed to them as a hideous nightmare of oppression, beyond which lay Rousseau's dream of the ideal state without kings or governments or aristocracy, with a free people governing themselves under the guidance of natural instincts and untrammelled by the fetters of social servitude. It was a dream which made men mad, so that once having had this dream they could not yawn themselves to sleep again, but awakened with a fierce energy to destroy and reform. Rousseau himself, the dreamer, slept before the great awakening, but throughout the Revolution it was his spirit and his doctrine which animated the nation with ideals that turned them into devils, into hypocrites, and into heroes.

Weak sentimentalist as he was in many ways, he had a strength of sincerity in the natural rights of man and a passionate emotion on the virtues of natural liberty which made his words burn like fire in the brains of men and women

to whom nature and nature's laws had been concealed under centuries of human artifice and fraud. How it came about that Jean-Jacques Rousseau of all men in France, he whose life had been a long blunder, stained with viciousness and pitiful in its weakness, should have evolved these high ideals of humanity can hardly be understood ; but neither Mirabeau nor Danton nor Marat nor Robespierre had such power over a revolting people as the son of the Genevan watch-maker, who, living on the charity of friends, wrote in a rural retreat the gospel of a revolution.

CHAPTER III

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SALONS

THE philosophers, whose audacities of intellect destroyed the traditions upon which the old order of France had rested with a security that seemed inviolable, had, with all their faults, the virtue of sincerity. They were in deadly earnest. They preached the necessity of revolution and they were not terrified by the spectres of their own imagining. But they had the advantage of living before the ideas sown by them were ripe for the harvest, and of dying before the work of destruction they had prepared was begun with a fine frenzy of popular enthusiasm. Rousseau died in 1778, Voltaire in the same year, Diderot and D'Alembert were both dead before 1785.

With these men passed away a society which, in spite of much that was rotten and vicious in its moral code, was animated by enthusiasm for great ideas. Curiously, the men and women who came after them, who were young enough to see those ideas accomplished in action, had but little of the real sincerity of their predecessors, and inherited only the false reflection of their idealism. It was a very decadent society that we see in Paris immediately before the Revolution and during the first years of its dramatic progress. A different spirit reigned in the salons of the aristocracy and 'intellectuals' from what we have seen during the reign of the philosophers. A sort of light-hearted dalliance with terrible facts but dimly understood succeeded the grim

earnestness of Voltaire and Rousseau, a frivolous and vicious indifferentism, a false and insincere philosophy of *laissez faire*. Hard and ugly facts stared them in the face, but society smiled and pretended not to see. A volcano was at their feet. With perfumed handkerchief at nose, they trod daintily over the smouldering fire and talked of the latest opera. The groans of a hungry people were in their ears, and the growls of wild beasts. They were deaf to these ugly sounds, and diverted themselves with discussions on the principles of Greek civilisation. We see the difference clearly in the society of the salons, in the character of the women who still to a large extent were the mistresses of the nation's leaders, the intellectual mistresses. The two most remarkable hostesses of the older salons were Madame du Deffand and Madame Geoffrin. They were both women worthy to be the friends and the confidantes of great minds. Madame du Deffand, a naughty young girl and a wicked old woman, was very wise in wickedness. She had a poisoned wit, her epigrams were waspish, her stories were salted with strong unpalatable flavourings, her love affairs, until old age wrote the last chapter to romance, were frankly scandalous. But she had a real greatness of intellect. The ideas of the philosophers who were her guests were not above her head. She could in fact poke her wrinkled finger into their weak places, and with a few stinging words whip their follies. She saw as well as they did, and perhaps a little better, what all this philosophy would lead to. She had the courage to face facts, and faced them with cold, clear eyes that did not falter. When those eyes grew dim and she fingered the faces of her friends instead of seeing them, never mistaking their identity, she still retained her strong, masculine mind, and, sitting in a great armchair which looked like a barrel so that she reminded her visitors of Diogenes in his tub, her

conversation still enchained the best intellects of France, and they learnt from her many a lesson of life, not wholly pleasant, but certainly true.

Her rival, Madame Geoffrin, was a better and a nobler woman. She had the inestimable advantage of a heart, and as the other old lady was the tribunal of wit and intellect so she was the exponent of sense and reason. 'The witty people who went to see her,' said her friend, the Prince de Ligne, 'did not make wit when there; on the contrary they became almost kind-hearted.' France would have been better for more ladies of this kind. Her philosophy in life was to be happy and to make other people happy. This philosophy has been professed by many, but there are few who have practised it like Madame Geoffrin. She was ready to buy happiness for others with her own money, which is not so common a characteristic that it may pass unnoticed. To the Abbé Morellet, a poor devil of a wit who found the Church a miserable profession for a man of taste, she said, 'I have assigned to you 15,000 francs. Do not speak of it and do not thank me for it.' To her lawyer, who was conducting a suit on her behalf, she said: 'Wind up my affairs. Do they want money? I have some, and what can I do better than buy tranquillity with it?' Many stories are told of a generosity that was founded on principle. 'Let us be agreeable,' she said constantly to her friends, and she was so displeased if they were miserable that to humour her they really became happy in her presence. Really a genial and admirable philosophy for every-day life. Yet, though she said 'Let us be agreeable,' she was not frivolous in character. She had a solid good sense, and a genius for definition. That is to say, she could draw lines round a hazy idea, and show it as it would look as a concrete fact. That also was valuable when so many hazy ideas were floating

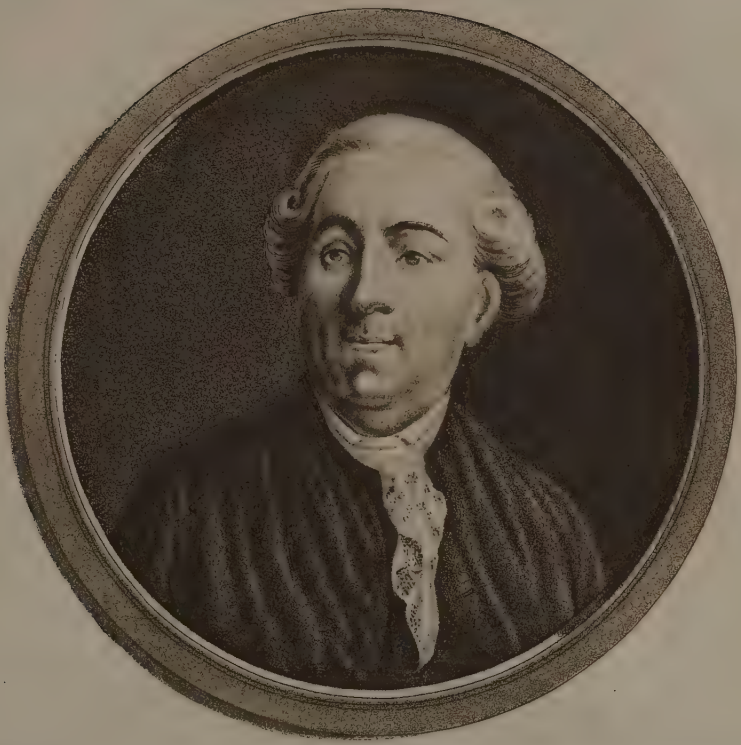
in the atmosphere. She, too, as clear-sighted as Madame du Deffand and more serious, could see what a dangerous road was being paved by the *beaux esprits* who crowded her salons. 'It leads to our own ruin,' she said, and gave her reasons. She had a heart large enough to understand the nation's need of revolution. But she had the intellect to know that her own set would perish of their own philosophy. It was her desire for personal comfort and happiness which made her tremble at the consequences of the new ideas. Theoretically she approved of them, and, as a friend of hers remarked, 'she was willing that the philosophers should move the world on condition that the kingdom of Diderot should come without disorder or confusion.' Her exquisite sense of courtesy which had given to her character so much grace and kindliness was communicated to her servants. She died of apoplexy in 1777, and while she was in an unconscious state preceding death a valet who was despatched to make inquiries about her brought back a message that madame was very grateful for the inquiries and sent monsieur word, with her compliments, that she had lost the use of speech. Her death was the break-up of the old society of the salons which had really been the academies of the revolutionary philosophy. The new salons of younger women, coming close to the Revolution itself, were also academies of philosophy, but it was a philosophy founded on frivolity, not on the rights of man; on selfishness and vanity, and the fashionable craze of a pseudo-Greek renaissance, largely if not wholly artificial and insincere. To the intellectual mistresses of great minds succeeded the coquettes of boudoir loungers, and after the men of grim prophecy and burning enthusiasm came the Abbé Sieyès with his pedagogic plans for constitutional reform, M. Necker with his bank-clerk systems of State, Lafayette with his gilt-edged republicanism,

the Comte de Ségur with his butterfly mind, Madame de Staël swollen with self-conceit that concealed the poverty of her ideas, and a crowd of people who were ready to play with revolution like children with dynamite, ignorant of its deadly forces, and anticipating nothing but beautiful and harmless fireworks.

Outside the salons, in Parisian and provincial clubs, were men, and women too, who took Rousseauism for their intellectual food and Voltaireism for their intellectual alcohol, finding this diet productive of a growing sense of power and of an agreeable intoxication of mind. They, unknown yet and unregarded, had inherited the stern enthusiasm of the older philosophy which had become stale now in the aristocratic salons of Paris.

Chief among the hostesses of those salons where the new intellectuals of Parisian society gathered before and during the Revolution was Madame de Staël, the daughter of Necker, the Finance Minister, whose endeavour to save France from bankruptcy and to reform the abuses of taxation had made him a popular hero, whose plain statement of the national finances in his famous 'Compte Rendu' had deeply incensed the Court and had caused his dismissal and banishment, and who, summoned back in 1787, called for the States-General which rang up the curtain on the drama of revolution. Germaine Necker, the only daughter of this minister, was but fifteen years old when the 'Compte Rendu' told the people of France some very plain and unpleasant truths, and she was twenty when, after a little dalliance with William Pitt, she married the Baron de Staël-Holstein, Swedish ambassador in France, who was seventeen years her senior. It was there that she began her reign in Paris as a society queen, and, in spite of her youthfulness and her lack of physical charm, attracted around her all the liberal

minds of the day. But though young in years there was not much youthful innocence and *naiveté* in this remarkable woman. Her education and domestic upbringing had developed all her natural precocity, so that at eleven it is said she could discuss the philosophy of Rousseau, of Goethe, and of Richardson (whose novels were then fascinating France) with the utmost assurance and dogmatism. Her gentle, amiable, and commonplace mother, the Suzanne Curchod beloved and deserted by Gibbon, who, as all the world knows, 'sighed like a lover, but obeyed like a son,' had a motherly pride in the accomplishments and intellect of her plain little daughter, and at Madame Necker's receptions Germaine while still a child had occupied the central position, receiving the flattery and homage of men old enough to be grandfathers. She was a girl of strong sense, and still stronger sensibility. She was excitable, passionate, imaginative, and one may easily understand that, having received the incense of flattery since childhood, her head was filled with a sense of her own importance and of her future destiny. She developed her imagination by writing essays, poems, and stories, none of which have outlived the hand that wrote them. She obtained some visionary ideals of government by the study of Plutarch's 'Lives,' which book was being read by other young ladies of France equally inspired by it with a theoretical love of classic republicanism. But she had the advantage not possessed by other demoiselles of living in the very atmosphere of political enonomy and statecraft. Her father, whom she adored with a more than filial admiration, was behind the scenes of the French Government, and with all his weakness of character and limitations of vision, had a practical knowledge of the machinery of State. Thus Germaine Necker, afterwards Madame de Staël, could obtain a great deal of information which was not



Duplessi Bertaux.

NÉKER

written in history books or school philosophies. Having a naturally inquisitive mind, and being coached and even consulted by M. Necker, who had a pious belief in his daughter's genius, she had all the materials for the formation of opinion and principles. These were readily drawn out and gradually strengthened and fixed by the political conversation of her salon, and it is generally agreed by her contemporaries that underneath all her volubility and her emotionalism there was revealed a strong and shrewd mind. But she had just those defects which characterised the society in which she lived: defects which had not existed in the earlier society of the salons. Her republicanism was an intellectual pose, not a passionate sincerity. It did not spring from the knowledge of a people's miserable condition under a rotten and vicious form of government. It may honestly be doubted whether Madame de Staël, or any but a very few of those well-bred people who prated so glibly of liberty and political ideals, felt any thrill of sympathy, any throb of love and pity, for the crushed and starving peasantry of France. Vanity and self-conceit, the ambitious desire to play the leading part in a highly interesting and enjoyably exciting drama, were the motives which animated the society reformers of France. They were all for revolution. That was part of the game. But it was to be a revolution conducted on a well-ordered stage, with plenty of limelight for the leading actors—*pour vous et moi, mon ami*—with many noble orations delivered in the finest style, with a little shuffling of political cards, and some necessary changes of stage furniture, and then a beautiful transformation scene, greeted by the applause of a grateful people. The vision of a guillotine chopping off fair and noble heads, with a nasty smell of curdled blood in the gutters of Paris, never occurred to Madame de Staël and her 'liberal' lovers and

friends. When that vision had become a reality they were amazed and horrified.

What visions were about, before the Bastille came thundering down, were agreeably free from any realism, and Madame de Staël in her drawing-room could talk of Greek civilisation, and of her estimable father's genius, without a qualm. Her political aspirations were not so absorbing that she could find no time for more feminine desires. In spite of her high ideals she had very human passions. She had a strong desire to be loved. It is not an evil desire in a woman, but Madame de Staël was a little too roving in her quest. Her husband, who had been negotiated for so carefully by her ambitious parents, was the last person she looked to for satisfaction in this respect. He, poor man, was consumed with jealousy, and irritated to exasperation by his wife's experiments in love's psychology. She was openly *chère amie* with one of Louis the Well-beloved's numerous illegitimate offspring, a certain M. de Narbonne, fop and carpet warrior, who played 'the pretty French Prince,' and did it rather well, it seems, though he was known to his male friends at least as *un fort mauvais sujet*, that is to say, a very loose fish. She was quite pleased with the 'liberal' ideas of this young man and was quite desolated when, after the Revolution broke out, he was sent to rejoin his regiment, 'being,' he remarked pathetically, 'in a conflict between the dictates of his duty and his conscience.' This statement was shrewdly answered by a candid acquaintance who told him that 'I know of no duty but that which conscience dictates. I presume his conscience will dictate to him to join the strongest side.' This M. de Narbonne was one of the first to emigrate from France when the 'liberal' ideas which he professed were beginning to bear bloody fruit. As an *émigré* his reputation as *un fort mauvais*

sujet was well sustained, 'which,' says the same critic, 'well accords with a certain obliquity of aspect that distinguishes a countenance otherwise good.'

But Madame de Staël had other strings to Cupid's bow. Every new man she met had for her the possibility of a lover in him. Perhaps after many disappointments the newcomer could give her that passionate experience, that delicious madness of love, partly intellectual and partly sexual, which was the great need of her nature but was never adequately satisfied. Gouverneur Morris, the plain, straightforward, and very shrewd Ambassador to France from the United States, was, in spite of his wooden leg, one of the men whom she was prepared to meet half way in an *entente cordiale*. The American, however, was not of a 'coming on' disposition. He gives an interesting little impression of his first meeting with her. 'Monsieur,' she says amiably, after the preliminary courtesies, '*vous avez l'air très imposant*.' 'This,' says the Ambassador in his diary, 'is accompanied with that look which, without being what Sir John Falstaff calls the "leer of invitation," amounts to the same thing.'

Gouverneur Morris, who had very quick eyes and ears though a slow and deliberate speech, did not fail to observe Madame de Staël's little weaknesses. 'I think that in my life I never saw such exuberant vanity as that of Madame de Staël upon the subject of her father. Speaking of the opinion of the Bishop of Autun upon the subject of Church property, which has lately been printed, there having been no opportunity to deliver it in the Assembly, she says it is excellent, it is admirable. In short there are two pages in it which are worthy of M. Necker. Afterwards she says that wisdom is a very rare quality. She says she knows of no one who possesses it in a superlative degree except her father.' This was after the summoning of the States-General and

the self-constitution of the National Assembly, by which time M. Necker had been guilty of as much foolishness as any man who has called himself a statesman. No wonder, however, that with so much adoration in his domestic circle, he still had a charming confidence in his own genius.

Gouverneur Morris, though he was not blind to the faults of the ugly young woman who discoursed with masculine dogmatism in her drawing-room, paid her a handsome compliment in his diary. 'She is a woman of wonderful wit, and above vulgar prejudices of any kind. Her home is a kind of Temple of Apollo, where the men of wit and fashion are collected twice a week at supper, and once at dinner, and sometimes more frequently.' The one-legged American, a handsome fellow in spite of his wooden stump, and very popular with the ladies in spite of his simplicity and bluntness, was at this time having a very lively flirtation with a certain Madame de Flahaut, who was the *chère amie* of Talleyrand, the intriguing and loose-moraled Bishop of Autun. That on Morris's side the sentiment was not a very deep one may be seen from the following note in his diary, which also supplies a vivid little picture of the ménage De Staël.

'I go to-day (November 9, 1789) to dine at M. Necker's, and place myself next to Madame de Staël; and as our conversation grows animated she desires me to speak in English, which her husband does not understand. Afterwards, in looking round the table, I observe in him much emotion. I tell her that he loves her distractedly, which she says she knows, and that it renders her miserable. Condole with her a little on her widowhood, the Chevalier de Narbonne being absent in Franche-Comté. Much conversation with the Bishop of Autun. I desire her to let me know if he succeeds, because in such case I will take advantage of such

intelligence in making my court to Madame de Flahaut. A proposition more whimsical could hardly be made to a woman, but the manner is everything and so it passes. She tells me she rather invites than repels those who incline to be attentive, and some time after says that perhaps I may become an admirer. I tell her that it is not impossible ; but as a previous condition she must agree not to repel me, which she promises. After dinner I seek a conversation with the husband, which relieves him. He inveighs bitterly against the manners of this country and the cruelty of alienating a wife's affections. He says that women here are more corrupt in their minds and hearts than in any other way. I regret with him, on general grounds, that prostration of morals which unfits them for good government. Hence he concludes, and I believe truly, that I shall not contribute towards making him uncomfortable.'

M. de Talleyrand was a much more dangerous rival to poor Baron de Staël-Holstein. As a churchman he was, according to the fashion of France, allowed a little liberty in love, but he was in bad odour socially on account of the audacious publicity of his amours, which went beyond the limits of tolerance. He was especially dangerous because he was always ready to be the lover of any woman who might be useful to him, and between him and Madame de Staël there was a considerable attraction on account of her political position. Talleyrand at this time was ambitious of a place in the government of France, and therefore inclined to be the friend of Necker's daughter as long as Necker himself held the reins of power, or the popular sympathy which would place those reins in his hand. On the other side Madame de Staël, whose love affairs generally had a political element, was anxious to gain an influence over the mind of a man who was the friend of Mirabeau and likely to be,

as he was in fact, Mirabeau's successor as director of the department of Paris. Elected by the clergy of his diocese of Autun to represent them in the States-General he played for power in an astute and unscrupulous manner by betraying his own order and thereby gaining the confidence of the people. It was he who proposed the measure for the confiscation of Church property, rightly calculating that nothing could make him more popular with the rank and file of the revolutionaries in the Assembly, of which eventually he was appointed president. That Talleyrand was a villain of the first order, ready to betray his closest friends for power, and willing to sell his services for money, is proved conclusively by all historical evidence. But whether he was a great statesman is not quite so certain. De Quincey called him 'that rather middling bishop, but very eminent knave.' This perhaps is unjust to his genius. There is no doubt that he played his game with consummate skill from the beginning of the Revolution, and later in history, as a minister of France under the Directory and the Empire, he served his country, as well as himself, with a shrewdness and energy for which modern France has reason to be grateful. All this, however, is anticipating events, and in this chapter he is to be remembered only as the ambitious and intriguing adventurer, as the lover of Madame de Flahaut, and as the private enemy of Gouverneur Morris, who seriously endangered his position with that lady.

This Gouverneur Morris, who has been mentioned so frequently, deserves a little portrait to himself. Although an American, he played a quiet but considerable part in the Revolution and had a remarkable influence over the minds of men and women who helped to make, and also to mar, that movement. The friend of Washington, with an excellent record behind him in the United States Republic, he was

only thirty-four years of age when he came to Paris as Ambassador. He had a refined and thoughtful face, and the loss of a leg in a carriage accident did not seriously detract from his personal attractions in the eyes of the ladies of Paris, who found a delightful piquancy in the simplicity and plainness of this young man. The loss of that leg was not without its usefulness. At the time of the accident a friend cheered him up by remarking that he would be less tempted into the giddy adventures of youth. Morris had a sense of humour which gives an additional charm to his character. 'My dear sir,' he said, 'you argue the matter so handsomely and point out so clearly the advantages of being without legs that I am almost tempted to part with the other.' He could extract philosophy out of his mutilation even without the moralising of his friends. 'I shall be steadier on one leg than on two,' he remarks cheerfully, and on one occasion, when his life was in danger in the streets of Paris, the loss of his limb was a means of escape. His carriage was surrounded by a howling mob who abused him as an aristocrat, and threatened him with a nasty form of death. 'An aristocrat!' said the Ambassador, with a fine *sang froid*. 'An aristocrat!' Here he poked his wooden stump out of the carriage door. 'Yes, truly, one who has lost his leg in the cause of American liberty.' The statement was a little imaginative, but it served its purpose, and the mob, easily moved from one emotion to another, gave him a cheer and let him pass.

As Ambassador of course he had the *entrée* to every great salon in Paris, though the flunkeys were inclined to stare at the simplicity of his dress, the plainness of his equipage, the wooden stump, and the tone of republican equality with which he greeted them. Even in an era of Revolution the flunkey is still a snob. Morris not only had the *entrée*

to all the political circles, but being a republican and the ambassador of a republic his opinions were eagerly asked for, and seriously considered by the reformers and the leaders of the moderate party. He gave his opinions with a freedom and a candour which do infinite credit to his courage and honesty. Although naturally sympathetic towards the revolutionary ideals of the French people, he saw with perfect clearness that men like Lafayette and Necker, theorists and weak-minded men governed by vanity rather than by conviction, would bring the nation to chaos and ruin. Observing the character and morals of the liberal nobles and the political women of the salons, he was convinced that they were moving towards their own destruction. Their illogical ideals and fantastic theories seemed to him more dangerous to the welfare of France than the existing form of government. Their self-conceit and wretched intrigues of ambition were contemptible to him. The way they played with the frightful forces of social volcanoes, ignorant of their meaning and careless of their consequence, filled him with horror and dismay. All this he told them with perfectly straightforward speech, caring not a jot if he offended them, but very anxious for the welfare of a people he loved in spite of all their faults. But he does not seem to have offended anyone except Lafayette, whose vanity he touched to the quick. The others, especially the women, who liked him for his purity of heart though they were willing enough to tempt it, rebuked him with smiles for being an aristocrat and a traitor to the principles of his own government.

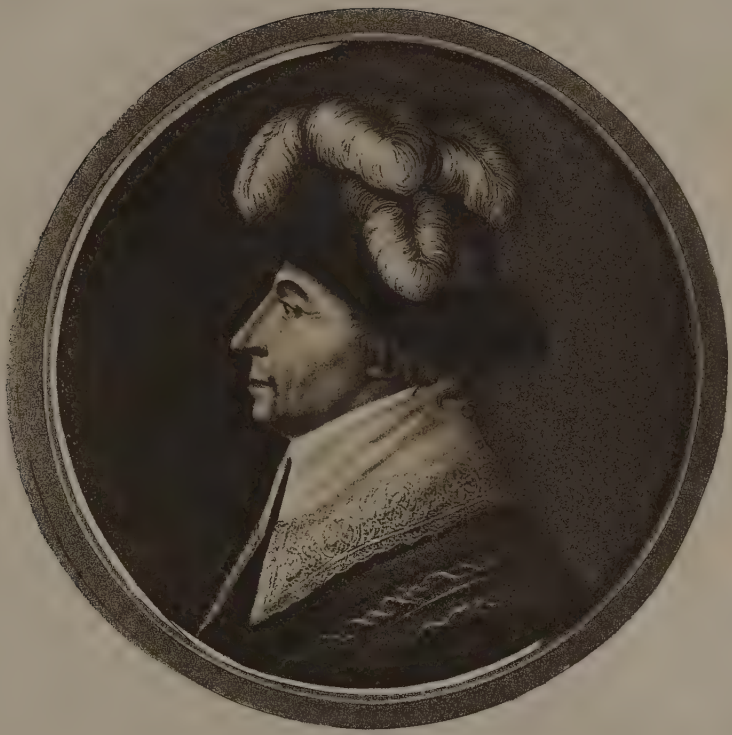
In a way he was an aristocrat. He saw that a republic in France could be accomplished only by horrible bloodshed, and he did not believe that the French people had any genius for republicanism. For that reason he was the friend of the King and Queen and used all his influence on

behalf of constitutional monarchy. The King and Queen themselves were not ungrateful for his assistance in their troubles, and when the storm-clouds of the Revolution had burst over the nation, and the men whom Morris had distrusted proved their weakness, we find the quiet and honest American appealed to by the friends of monarchy to draw up a model constitution for France which might be submitted to the King for his guidance or acceptance. Of course there were more persons than one busy with the same work. The Abbé Sieyès, for instance, generally had a 'constitution' in each of his coat pockets. Morris records that at Madame de Flahaut's 'he descants with much self-sufficiency on government, despising all that was said or sung on that subject before him, and Madame says that his writings and opinions will form in politics a new era, as that of Newton in physics.' Morris had sufficient sense of humour to be rather amused at his own occupation. For December 8, 1791 (when the people of France had demonstrated the unmistakable meaning of revolution) he makes the following note in his diary:

'Continue preparing the form of a constitution for this country, when a person comes in who tells me that in July last he sent the form of a constitution for America to General Washington. He says that he has made such subjects his study for over fifty years, that he knows America perfectly, though he has never seen it, and is convinced that the American constitution is good for nothing. I get rid of him as soon as I can, but yet I cannot help being struck with the similitude of a Frenchman who makes constitutions for America, and an American who performs the same good offices for France. Self-love tells me there is a great difference of persons and counsellors, but self-love is a dangerous counsellor.' Morris's 'constitution' was duly brought under

the King's notice by Vicq-d'Azyr, the Queen's physician, a man of much charm and brilliance, who recognised the sturdy independence and vigorous mind of the American Ambassador. But to Louis XVI. all the 'constitutions' that could ever be devised on paper would have been of no avail. He was the representative of an order which had been condemned in the hearts of an enraged people, and no paper plan of government could form a barrier between the condemned prisoner and the judges who were the executioners of their own decrees.

The Madame de Flahaut who has been mentioned by Morris, and to whom for a time he really lost his heart, was a remarkable woman in her way, and is typical of the ladies of Paris during the first period of the Revolution. She had married the Comte de Flahaut when he was fifty years old and already worn out with dissipation. In such a marriage there could of course be no love, but Madame must find a lover like other women so circumstanced. She found one in Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, who became the father of her child. She also had at least one other lover, by her own confession, but to Talleyrand she was as intellectually faithful as it was in her nature to be. He rather frightened her, one may fancy, by his cold and cruel manner. But, on the other hand, he had a respect for her judgment and social abilities and confided to her all his political secrets, perhaps also some of his ambitions. In this way she was useful to Morris, who as her confidante, and as the most dangerous rival of Talleyrand in her affections, learnt many of the intrigues in which the bishop and the tools whom he called his friends were busily engaged. Morris also had a high opinion of her abilities. 'She shows me a letter to the Bishop,' he writes, 'which is perfect. A deep knowledge of human character, an acquaintance with the world which



Duplessi-Bertaux

JOSEPH EMMANUEL SIEYES

arises from reflection on the hearts of those who are in it, and the most just conclusions of the regulation of his conduct, enforced by the tenderness of feminine friendship—all this joins to render a hasty production perfect. I thought well of myself, but I submit frankly to a superiority which I feel.'

Talleyrand was not at all pleased at discovering the young American Ambassador so frequently in the boudoir of Madame de Flahaut, and he expressed his disapproval so sternly that the lady was taken ill. She was inclined to rebel against his dominion, and in her anger let fall for the first time some expressions showing that she knew the weak and base side of her former lover. 'I may if I please,' says the American in his diary, 'wean her from all regard towards him. But he is the father of her child, and it would be unjust.' At one of these boudoir interviews Madame was depressed and wept plenteously, the tender-hearted Morris wiping the tears away as they fell, which 'silent attention brings forth professions of endless affection. She means every word of it now, but nothing here below can last for ever.'

It lasted very much less than for ever, and Morris came to the conclusion that 'she is a coquette and very fickle.' She deserted him for a young Englishman, Lord Wycombe, and Morris quarrelled with her often and bitterly. But they always remained friends, in spite of these 'tiffs,' and she gave him her confidence so far as to inquire in an amiable way, when M. de Flahaut was seriously in danger of his life, whom Morris would recommend to be her next husband. It seems a little callous, but no doubt she put it in a most charming way! 'I tell her,' says Morris, 'that it is in contemplation to permit the marriage of the clergy. She says she will never marry the Bishop, because she cannot go with him to the altar without mentioning first her connection with another.' There is something almost admirable in

this candour of confession. Eventually her husband did become a victim of the guillotine, and left Madame de Flahaut a widow. She herself fled to the state of Holstein, and while shedding tears, as was only decent no doubt, over the husband whom she had hated, did not forgo the pleasures and privileges of attractive widowhood.

'A coquette and very fickle.' It is a charge from which few ladies of Parisian society could be acquitted. There was for instance Madame de Suze, a delightful little lady who, in Morris's words, 'could pick a maggot out of her dog's nose with an exquisite grace,' and receive a gentleman friend while she reclined in her bath—made decently opaque with milk—without any sense of shame. She shared with Madame de Ségur the pleasure of having the Swiss swashbuckler, the Baron de Besenval, for an acknowledged lover. To her friends she mourned his death with touching emotion. 'According to Parisian morals it is equivalent to the loss of a husband in America,' says our friend the Ambassador. In politics she was extremely liberal and all for reform—until the Revolution. Then she, like other ladies of her class, is extremely indignant at the turn things take, and more than a little alarmed. During the riots in Paris and the massacre of aristocrats we find her looking as pretty as ever, embroidering with her tambourine needle. But she is quite out of temper with politics, and avows her determination to be of the party which will furnish money, be that which it may, 'because the husbands of herself and her sister *ont beaucoup sur le Roi*.' A worldly little woman, but not uncommon in her type.

The Comtesse de Tessé, another lady who leads a salon, is more consistent in her republicanism, having devoted many years of her life to the formation of one of those numerous 'constitutions' which could be bought by the bushel in

Paris. She is prepared to shed the last drop of her blood to see it carried through, and is so passionate in her hatred of royalty that she even quarrels 'beyond the bounds of decorum' with Madame de Staël, in that lady's drawing-room, because she, M. Necker's daughter, speaks well of Mirabeau, who is known to be in secret treaty with the royal family. But even she begins to reconsider her opinions when the revolution which she had so ardently desired begins its desperate work, and the joy of shedding her blood does not seem so intoxicating when it seems probable that the privilege may be hers. Morris, whom she had scorned as an aristocrat, appears to her a more reasonable being, and she is converted to his common-sense policy. 'There will be many more such converts,' says the shrewd American.

Madame de Nadaillac, another lady of importance, is at the opposite pole of politics to Madame de Tessé. She is one of the few women outside the Court circle who are not seduced to the liberal principles of the intellectual class. She is frankly a champion of the old *régime*, and believes firmly in the divine right of kings and the privileges of the noble order. She claims the American Ambassador as one of her own side, insisting that he is an *aristocrate outré* in spite of his being the representative of a republican government. Morris, who is always amiable with the ladies, does not contradict her. He tells her that he is too old to change his opinions of government, but he will be just what she pleases. Nevertheless, though he is agreeable to his hostess, he sickens at the guests who crowd her salon. 'We have here the Abbé Maury,' he notes in his diary, 'who looks like a downright ecclesiastical scoundrel, and the rest are fierce aristocrats. They have the word "valet" written on their foreheads in large characters. Maury is formed to govern

such men, and such men are formed to obey him. Maury, however, seems to have too much vanity for a great man.' That vanity was the ruin of France and of the Revolution. Aristocrats and republicans were both tainted with it, and the welfare of France was not so much the motive of their endeavours as the ambition to occupy the centre of the political stage. Maury, however, notwithstanding Morris's opinion of him as 'a downright ecclesiastical scoundrel,' was a man of courage and eloquence. The last quality was not uncommon. There was too much eloquence in the National Assembly. But courage was distinctly rare, and we may give some honour to him for the bold way in which he defended the cause of the Church and nobles against the overwhelming tide of popular opinion, thereby risking his life. After the Revolution, when the forces of reaction were triumphant, he obtained his reward by becoming archbishop and cardinal.

The salon of the Comte and Comtesse de Ségur was also frequented by a good many people who had 'valet' written on their foreheads, though it admitted also men of a distinctly liberal stamp. The Comte de Ségur himself, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was by no means 'a fierce aristocrat.' He was a friend of the royal family and believed himself to have the confidence of the King and Queen, but he played for popularity with the Democrats, and like Lafayette, who will figure in these pages later on, attempted the difficult feat of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. In his younger days he had secured a reputation as a *bel esprit*, a philosopher and a fine gallant, and he could never bring himself to believe that such a reputation did not qualify him for a leadership of revolution. The Prince de Ligne, who was his friend, has given a charming portrait of the man at his best, and although we must discount a

little on account of friendship, we need not doubt that Ségur was, socially, a delightfully irresponsible and egotistical person. The Prince describes this 'phenomenon,' whom he calls 'Elzéar':

'He has a touch of genius and looks like a sylph, for he is almost transparent; he is a salamander when he writes, for then he is all flame. He has very little human nature, no desires, no passions, and I fear few pleasures, though he suffers pain. His sensibility, for instance, procures him something else than enjoyment. The depth of his reflection turns to sorrow rather than to joy. He neglects the charms of the present to think about the troubles of the future. He is sometimes too young and sometimes too old. Look at him walking along in his overcoat, with its small collar, head down, body forward, with a big book under his left arm and a little one in his right hand, in which is also a little cane with a red knob, which he never puts upon the ground. He will plunge into a wood and climb a mountain. Nature hides nothing from him; physics and astronomy open their treasures to him, and mechanism her workshop.

'Are you afraid of this phenomenon, though I warned you in the beginning it was not alarming? Fear nothing! He does marvels without being marvellous. Do not be uneasy about his humours or his sombre meditations, for this elderly young man can laugh like an idiot and never stop himself; or if he does, a mere nothing will start him again. He is kind, simple, nay, indifferent about himself. He is the first Frenchman who has understood Russia. The Vicomte de Ségur (his son) is less correct, more negligent, less witty; there is, however, an agreeable piquancy in his work. They both deserve their success in society.'

The Comte de Ségur, as already related, was so amiable that when the Comtesse confessed her misdemeanour with

the Baron de Besenval, he forgave his wife and his friend, and all three lived together upon the most comfortable terms. During the Revolution this extraordinary man, who had a real love of liberty in spite of his friendliness to the royal family, endeavoured vainly to take a middle course between the extreme democrats and the aristocratic party, thereby losing his influence over both sides. Nevertheless in his old age he was not embittered by the tragedy of events, and his last act was a eulogium on the Revolution of July.

There was one social circle in Paris, before the Revolution, which had a more important influence upon the destinies of France than any yet described. At the head of it was not an intellectual coquette like Madame de Staël or Madame de Flahaut, but a prince of the blood royal, a debauchee and heartless ruffian, a man of horrid vice and treacherous ambitions. The Palais Royal, which had been made a place of infamy by Philippe d'Orléans, Regent of France during the minority of Louis XV., was the haunt of loose women, profligate courtiers, gamblers, adventurers and panders, revolutionary priests, intriguing nobles and political firebrands, under the patronage of Louis Philippe Joseph, Duc d'Orléans, afterwards ' Philippe Égalité.'

Philippe d'Orléans was the victim of heredity. His great-grandfather, the Regent, had destroyed himself by excess of sensual indulgence and riotous debaucheries. He bequeathed to his family all the evil tendencies of his own body. As Duc de Chartres the younger Orléans had been notorious as a debauchee. The devil, they say, is not so black as he is painted. It is probable, therefore, that even the Duc de Chartres, who had a devil, was not quite such a maniac of passion as he has been depicted by many of his contemporaries. If we were to accept the truth of the popular pamphlets before the Revolution we should have to

believe that he ate roast babies, and took a morning bath of blood, and kept a harem of Oriental extravagance in sensual abandonment. We need not believe so much. On the other hand, his apologists—and there are people who will whitewash the devil himself—hardly inspire confidence, though we may admire their charity. The Prince de Ligne, the honourable and honest gentleman, deals very gently with him :

'The society of the Duc d'Orléans was, until a year before the Revolution, composed of all that was best among men. *Quantum mutatus ab illo!* Damnable spirit of vengeance, incalculable in results if yielded to ! Who could be purer in this world than the Chevalier de Durfort ? Yet he, Messieurs de Pons, Thiars, Coigny, Ségur, father and son, Lauzun, Chabot, Fitz-James, with several others and myself, loved the Duc d'Orléans. Had there been any appearance of his becoming a monster, should we not have seen it ? We saw him risk his life to save that of a servant ; we saw him renounce shooting and weep because his huntsman, rising suddenly from a ditch, received a few shot in the neck from his gun. Miserly he may have been in little things, but he was generous in great ones. His orgies were fables. He was always of correct behaviour himself, even in the midst of bad company ; polite with a certain haughtiness towards men, attentive and almost respectful to women ; gay himself, with good taste in his jokes ; he had more wit than conversation. Under other circumstances he would have resembled the Regent (his great-grandfather) ; he had the same class of mind. He was well-formed, well-made, with handsome eyes. It must have been his infamous revolutionary intrigues that made his visage red and bloated and hideous, for what passes in the soul is painted outwardly. When one has been his friend (a word of which he knew the value)

one must weep before detesting him, and forget the pleasant man in order to loathe the wretch who voted the death of his king.'

The Prince de Ligne, generally very truthful, must have been a little blinded by his partiality to royalism. The Duc d'Orléans, though not so wholesale in his low amours as described in the gutter press of Paris before he became a popular hero, is historically proved to have been a very complete scoundrel in his relations with women. He broke his wife's heart, the beautiful and charming daughter of the Duc de Penthièvre, and squandered her wealth with unscrupulous hands until she saved the remnants of her fortune by sheltering herself behind a judicial separation. The Duke, like his father, introduced an Anglomania to Paris, which adopted all the worst characters of English life of the Georgian period—hard drinking, heavy gambling, insane betting. These accomplishments he had acquired under the friendly tuition of that other very complete rascal, the Prince of Wales, afterwards George IV. of England, with whom he stayed when honouring our country with his royal presence. In France he had no standing at the Court. Both the King and Queen abhorred his morals and only tolerated him at all for the sake of his wife, whom they loved. They suspected him of secret ambitions which aimed at their own power and influence, and their suspicions were steadily increased by the open manner in which he cultivated the most advanced liberal thinkers of the day and played for popularity with the mob. He threw open the gardens of the Palais Royal to the people—an act which converted many patriots who had previously denounced him as a human ogre, and partly for monetary reasons, partly for political motives, let the arcades of his Palais Royal to tavern-keepers, newsvendors, and gambling saloon proprietors, who made the vicinity of

the palace a pandemonium of vice and sedition. It was at the Assembly of Notables that he first established his position as a leader of liberalism, and won the fickle enthusiasm of the people by demanding the abolition of the gabelle, or salt tax, which he justly described as 'infamous,' and by boldly challenging the prerogatives of the King. Louis XVI. retaliated by sending him, under a *lettre de cachet*, to his château of Villers-Cotterets. But he was soon back again at the Palais Royal, and under the influence of men like the Abbé Sieyès and Lauzun, of whom he was more a dupe than a patron, he spent enormous sums of money in disseminating revolutionary pamphlets and manifestoes throughout the country in order to influence public opinion for the election of revolutionary candidates to the approaching States-General. He had himself put up as the representative of five political divisions and was duly elected to three of them, upon which he issued a pamphlet under the title of *Délibérations*, proclaiming that the Third Estate—that is to say the deputies of the people as apart from the two orders of nobles and clergy—was the rightful authority of the nation. As we shall see later, it was the Duc d'Orléans who led the forty-seven nobles to secede from their own order and join the *Tiers Etat* in the National Assembly, and eventually he became such an advanced revolutionary that as plain Philippe Egalité, having renounced his titles in obedience to the decree of the Convention, he voted for the death of his king.

It is impossible to see into the hearts of men and to judge their motives. It is not beyond human possibility, perhaps, that this bloated, hideous mass of corruption, whose face was stamped with the imprint of his vices, had really at his rotten heart some sentiments of pity for a downtrodden people and some honest desire to sweep away a system which

had bred such a horror as himself. It is not impossible, but general experience of human nature leads one to believe that charity does not grow from corruption, nor fair ideals from a foul brain. It is more likely that in this case the historical verdict upon the character of Orléans is a true one, and that he allowed himself to float upon the tide of popular revolt and democratic passion because he believed that it would carry him to the throne of the man, his own blood relation and his king, for whose death he voted. That tide, however, carried him to another throne than that of his royal ancestors. He was raised above the people on the scaffold of the guillotine, and anointed with his own bad blood.

But this is anticipating the events of the Revolution, which we have not yet reached. Before the storm broke, the Palais Royal was still a place to which royalist nobles as well as liberal nobles and philosophical democrats could come without a shudder. The royalists, it is true, came rather for the sake of the poor outraged duchess. In her drawing-room Orléans himself seldom came, and the little society there was pleasant and gracious. The Prince de Ligne, Count Fersen, the Comte de Ségur, the Polignacs and Princesse de Lamballe, indeed most of the Court at Versailles, and sometimes the Queen herself, would visit the Duchess, if Orléans was away. Even Morris, the wooden-legged American, had the *entrée* to her salon, and so gained the confidence of the beautiful hostess that she told him of her domestic griefs, asked his advice about the intended separation from her husband, and begged his assistance in the defence of the royal family against the leaders of the democracy. At her right hand was a woman who added much to the charm of this drawing-room, the Comtesse de Chastellux, her lady-in-waiting and *confidante*. She was

a beautiful and accomplished Irishwoman, the wife of a French *maréchal* who had served under Rochambeau in the American War of Independence, and it was not a little for her sweetness and brightness of character that those immediately connected with the Court ventured into the unsavoury precincts of the Palais Royal. It was indeed a strange contrast, this place of quietude and elegant refinement, this little society of wits and courtiers and charming women, in the centre of a building whose ruler was openly plotting the downfall of the reigning king, who was leading a life of squalid vice, and who was subsidising the passions of a people by the wealth seized from the dowry of his wife.

In this room, where Morris sat watching everything with those shrewd grey eyes of his, he saw something of the best side of the French *noblesse*, and talked with men and women who, with little strength of character, perhaps, had some respect for virtue. This American, to whose diary we are so much indebted for accurate little portraits of French society at this time, became intimate with the men and women of salons widely differing in political opinion and social characteristics. He was therefore able to take a broad view of French society, and to judge them from a knowledge gained at first hand and from familiar acquaintance. The words with which he summed up his impressions in a letter to George Washington are a painful commentary upon the society of the salons:

'Everybody agrees,' he writes, 'that there is an utter prostration of morals; but the general position can never convey to the American mind the degree of depravity. It is not by any figure of rhetoric or force of language that the idea can be communicated. An hundred anecdotes and an hundred thousand examples are required to show the extreme

rottenness of every member. There are here men and women who are greatly and eminently virtuous. I have the pleasure to number many in my own acquaintance. But they stand forward from a background deeply and darkly shaded. It is, however, from such crumbling matter that the edifice of freedom is to be erected here.'

CHAPTER IV

MIRABEAU AND THE STATES-GENERAL

When the deputies of the Third Estate assembled at Versailles, after months of political excitement in the provincial towns from which they had been elected as representatives to the States-General, the Parisian mobs, who devoured them with greedy and exultant eyes, knew only a few of these men by name and fame. For the most part these gentlemen in black—grave, resolute young men with a trick of staring about them in an inquisitive and scornful manner as they listened to the opening speeches of the Assembly, or mild middle-aged men with a calm gentle gaze that did not reveal thoughts of revolution or revenge—were absolute strangers to the city of Paris. Gossip could make nothing of their names. No prophecies of the future could be founded on their antecedents. One of them, named Mirabeau, described his colleagues in a phrase which cannot be improved : ' More than five hundred Frenchmen,' he said, ' gathered from all parts of the kingdom, without a leader, without organisation, all free, all equal ; none with any authority, none feeling himself under any obligation to obey, and all, like Frenchmen, wishing to be heard before they would listen.'

One of the few men who stood out among his fellow deputies, attracting the roving eyes of the people outside the Assembly, and the eyes of the nobles, the clergy, and the deputies themselves, was he who spoke those words—Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau. A nobleman of France,

he had been rejected by his own class, who saw in him a demagogue and a renegade, but he had appealed to the people and they had eagerly elected him for both Marseilles and Aix. He had chosen to sit for the latter, and took his place among the deputies of the Third Estate not without an air of condescension and magnificent disdain. They looked at him curiously and coldly: at this man of ill-fame and notorious vice. They were a little afraid of him even now, before he had opened his lips or said one word to show his policy, because France had already marvelled at his eloquence and known the power of his audacious pen. The majority, at least, of the Third Estate were self-conscious of virtue, and wrapped themselves in the cloak of rectitude, and they regarded this man among them as an unprincipled adventurer, ready to sell his soul to anyone who would pay his price. They were cold side-glances, therefore, which greeted the entrance of Mirabeau among the representatives of the people. Not so, however, from the people themselves, who stood in dense masses along the road to Versailles, watching, with tigerish, fevered eyes, the men who were their pledges of liberty. To them Mirabeau was the man who would lead. They cared nothing for his vices. The enormity of them, exaggerated by the trumpet-mouth of rumour, only served to distinguish him. They saw in him a nobleman who had voluntarily abandoned his class, who as a prisoner under the tyranny of *lettres de cachet*, and as a fugitive from tyrannous laws had proclaimed the rights of the people, the sacred liberty of the individual, the sovereign power of the nation to make its own laws and shape its own government. It was not difficult to distinguish him among the crowd of grave, thin-lipped, plainly dressed, insignificant men. He was immense, loud, commanding, as he stood among them, silent and scowling. His stout, heavy body

was clothed in the exaggeration of fashion, with the vilest taste as it seemed to those of his own class, but magnificent to the poor devils in their rags and tatters. The glint of his enormous shoe-buckles dazzled them. His large brightly coloured coat-buttons looked gay upon his corpulent stomach. But they drew their breath when they gazed at his massive face and lion-like head, with his great mane of curled and powdered hair. There was prodigious power in that great, ugly, pock-marked, swollen, pimpled face, with its piercing black eyes, its full sensual mouth, its heavy jaw. It was the face of a man who might be both hero and devil. Just the man for the people of Paris who were hungering for a hero with a strain of the devil in him.

The private history of Mirabeau's life was known to them, as it was known throughout France, having been dragged, in all its sensational and sensual details, through the courts of law as the greatest *cause célèbre* of recent years.

There was hardly a man in Paris who did not know something of this man's father, the old Marquis de Mirabeau, the eccentric old tyrant and violent old philosopher who had launched something like fifty-four *lettres de cachet* against his wife and children, and in his spare time had written 'The Friend of Man' and 'Rural Philosophy.' There were still fewer who did not know how the Count himself had been sentenced to death for the abduction of a married woman, and after his exile in Holland returned with the audacity of demanding a restitution of conjugal rights from the wife he had deserted.

It was a queer and full-flavoured story, the biography of Honoré de Mirabeau: the sort of tale which men smack their lips over between draughts of sour wine in evil-smelling taverns. From his earliest days this Mirabeau had been a wild rascal, revolting against the stern discipline of a father

who alternated between the desire to make his son a philosopher by rigorous restraint and a severity of education, and the enraged assurance that the lad was a scoundrel born to be hanged. As a schoolboy he had successfully evaded discipline, and with his ugly face and boldness in depravity had entered upon his long career of seduction.

At seventeen he became a lieutenant in the Berri regiment of cavalry, stationed at the little garrison town of Saintes, where he became a terror to all good mothers and the black sheep of the officers' mess. Finally, having insulted his colonel, his father, in a fury, obtained a *lettre de cachet*, and Mirabeau was clapped into prison on the Isle of Rhé, near La Rochelle. But ugly as he was, and vicious, he had a fascination of manner, a delightful gaiety and frankness, which now, as always, captivated those who came within his influence. It was at the intercession of this prison governor that the Marquis de Mirabeau consented to liberate his son, and sent him, with the Legion of Lorraine, to Corsica. Here he served with real distinction, wiping out his former military disgrace by courageous conduct and amazing energy. The marquis began to think that his son was not such a scoundrel after all, and gave him authority on his estate at Mirabeau, where the young count made himself beloved for his hearty and genuine good nature, in spite of the irregularities of his morals. His father, who always had a sneaking fondness for him, and at times acknowledged his genius, was now in an excellent humour and set about arranging a marriage. He felt himself qualified to give advice on this subject: indeed there was no subject 'twixt heaven and earth upon which the Friend of Man was not prepared to lay down the law—his own marriage having been disastrous. In the most candid and brutal words he advised his son against taking to wife such a woman as his own

mother, a shrew and a wanton, a woman of bad blood and vile disposition. The younger Mirabeau entirely agreed with him, taking his father's side at this time in the domestic feuds which prevented monotony in the family château. There was something not only unnatural but horrible and obscene in the elder Mirabeau's behaviour to his wife and his discourse to the son she had given to him. Nor can one easily forget the part which Honoré Riquetti played in this domestic tragedy, being the enemy of his own mother when he wished to curry favour with his father, and her friend and champion when he was greedy for her pecuniary assistance. It was his father, the marquis, who arranged the marriage which took place between the Comte de Mirabeau, then aged twenty-three, and the daughter of the Marquis de Marignan. The lady was young, not very beautiful, and not very virtuous. But she was lively and eager to enjoy the gaieties of life, so that young Mirabeau did not tire of her or quarrel with her so soon as might be expected. The husband and wife plunged with both hands into the coffers of desire. They indulged in a sumptuous household, entertained in a royal manner, and with remarkable *sang-froid* accumulated an enormous burden of debt from which only a miracle or a dead marquis could ever relieve them. But the miracle did not happen and the Marquis de Mirabeau had a long lease of life. He also had a short way with erring sons. A *lettre de cachet*, that most convenient form of tyranny, was promptly despatched to the young count ordering him to the town of Manosque, to which he was restricted by the King's command. As it happened, the *lettre de cachet* was rather convenient to the prodigal son himself, for being under royal arrest he could not be touched by his creditors, and was therefore safe from the insanitary quarters of a debtors' prison. It was at this time that he quarrelled with

his wife. His infidelities had been numerous already, but, like many immoral husbands, he was profoundly shocked when he discovered that his wife was unfaithful—with a young musketeer who happened to be in his neighbourhood. Yet, with a magnanimity of which he was proudly conscious, he pardoned the weakness of the woman; but she, cold and disdainful, did not seek a renewal of his love. It was probably an agreeable interlude to his domestic differences when he was removed to the Château d'If, that grim prison where the imaginary Count of Monte Cristo suffered his long agonies. Afterwards, in the year 1775, he changed his lodgings to the castle of Joux, near Pontarlier. His imprisonment was not rigorous in either place. His wit and high spirits, and his extraordinary fascination of manner, always converted his governors into friends and his gaolers into servants. At the last place he had so much liberty that he was received *en famille* by the elderly Marquis de Monnier, President of the Law Courts, who treated him with gracious hospitality. Mirabeau returned his favours by stealing away his host's daughter. This young lady, Sophie de Ruffey, was a married woman, but Mirabeau seduced her virtue with that extraordinary and evil influence which he seemed able to exert over any woman who came under his magnetic gaze. She knew, she must have known, that she was giving up honour, influence, and happiness for dishonour, poverty, and misery. In those days, in spite of the easy moral code and the tolerance of intrigue when conducted judiciously, it was a dangerous thing for a married woman to elope, more dangerous still for her seducer. The Marquis de Monnier and the Marquis de Mirabeau were not fond and forgiving fathers. There was no doubt that what protection the law gave to outraged parents, and what punishment to outrageous offspring, would be demanded

by them to the fullest measure. Young Mirabeau showed a clean pair of heels, and fled with his mistress, who dressed herself in male clothes, across the frontier to Switzerland and afterwards to Amsterdam. Here they lived wretchedly, and the passion of their love was quickly forgotten under the stress of sheer want. But Mirabeau, with all his faults, was no malingerer. He had prodigious energy and squared his great shoulders to the task of providing the necessities of life. He sat down, pen in hand, and defied fate. He wrote translations of English books for Dutch booksellers, and ploughed stolidly through any hack work they could offer him. He also found time to discover his own temperament and genius, and his 'Essay on Despotism' threw down the gauntlet on behalf of the oppressed peoples of Europe. It was also a noble way of revenging himself upon tyrannical fathers. The two marquises had summoned the law to their aid, and were enjoying themselves in a grim way by calling forth the utmost terrors of the law upon the heads of the runaways. The Parliament of Besançon duly sentenced Mirabeau to death for abduction and, unable to carry out the judgment, obtained as much satisfaction as they could by having his effigy beheaded. Mirabeau did not care a rap for this theoretical death. Doubtless he was rather pleased with such dramatic emotions, especially as the sentence carried his name and fame from one end of France to the other. But he did not bargain for the more serious consequences of his crime. His father was relentless and even ready to spend money to bring his son to heel. The French agents of police finally discovered young Mirabeau's hiding-place, and brought him back to France under a writ of extradition. Sophie de Ruffey, who was also seized, was confined in a convent, and Mirabeau first learnt the meaning of rigorous imprisonment in the Château of Vincennes.

Here he remained for three-and-a-half years. They were not idle years, for he was at least allowed the privilege of books and papers. He read omnivorously and wrote industriously. For a time he solaced himself for the enforced austerity of his life by giving rein to the sensuality of his imagination. The letters he wrote to Sophie at this time, which he tried to smuggle through his gaolers, but which found their way eventually into the archives of the police at Paris, subsequently to be published to the world, are hot with passion and candid in their amorous language. To Mirabeau in his prison cell there came surging up all those sensuous fancies which even St. Anthony, the man of God, could hardly put away from him. Mirabeau was no St. Anthony, and instead of flogging his bare back until the agony of self-torture exorcised these fair foul devils, received them into the house of his soul with cordial greeting and friendly hospitality. All his life, even when he was absorbed all day long in the excitements of life and death and the problems of a nation's politics, Mirabeau was the victim of his sensual nature, and the sins of the flesh were the scourges of a not ignoble spirit. There were two men within him, the hero and the scoundrel, and if we may judge any man, or see within the secret heart of any man, we may pardon the grossness of Mirabeau as the heritage of bad blood from loose-living ancestors, while we acknowledge that so far as the spirit of the man could escape from the fetters of the flesh, it soared to high and noble aims.

In that prison of Vincennes he wrote worthier things than the love-letters to his mistress. His 'Essai sur les Lettres de cachet et les Prisons d'Etat' was a masterly and courageous denunciation of despotism, and revealed the sincere convictions of its author as to the divine right of liberty for the individual. In those long dreary hours of

confinement Mirabeau plumbed the depths of his own heart, and it was not a shallow heart like that of many a Frenchman who prated or scribbled glibly of fraternity and equality. With all this great man's vices and vanity, acknowledging all his jugglings with conscience and his errings from the straight path of truth, this at least must be admitted: that honestly and with ardour he desired the welfare of the French people; that he had high ideals of liberty, though hating anarchy; that he had the courage to defy the tyranny of democracy as well as the traditional despotism of autocratic government. Though sometimes his public conduct was violent and out of keeping with his private pledges, in his writings he was always the consistent advocate of reasonable liberty under free and constitutional government. From the time of his imprisonment at Vincennes to the hour of his death, these principles of moderation and liberal progress did not change.

It was in December 1780 that Honoré de Mirabeau was released from his confinement at the price of humiliation to his wife—an unpleasant task which he performed with a characteristic thoroughness of self-abasement. Two years later he succeeded in getting his sentence of death annulled. The trial caused the greatest sensation throughout the nation, and the eloquence of Mirabeau, who defended himself, was so amazing in its subtlety and in its grandiloquent power that his fame as an orator was firmly established. So audacious was he, so bold and overbearing, so impressive in his 'beauty of ugliness' and physical largeness, that it seemed to the crowded onlookers that not he was on his trial, but the judges, the jury, and the prosecuting counsel. Having gained this case, which cancelled his death-sentence and outlawry, he next proceeded to sue his wife for a restitution of conjugal rights, she on her side claiming a separation

on the ground of desertion. The second trial was even more sensational than the first and aroused the utmost interest in France; but Mirabeau weakened his case by bringing up the story of his wife's dishonour with the young musketeer, although he did it with a sentimental reference to the pardon that should be given to a woman's first fault. This exasperated the lady's family so acutely that their influence against him was more strongly exerted than would otherwise have been the case. He lost his suit, but on the other hand he gained additional fame as a man of extraordinary gifts of oratory. It is said that the opposing counsel, Portalis, one of the most distinguished barristers of France, was so overcome with mortification at the superiority of his unprofessional opponent that he was carried fainting from the court.

The unfortunate Sophie de Monnier had meantime been liberated from the convent in which she had been as close a prisoner as her former lover at Vincennes. The passion that had existed between this remarkable man and woman was not of an ordinary nature. Mirabeau was not ready to lose the world for love, and there is no doubt that if he had resumed his relationship with the companion of his exile he would have lost all his new prestige. But she no longer desired him. Equally fickle, she forfeited the pity which posterity would certainly have given to her by running away with a new lover. Yet, after all, we may give her pity, although she spoilt her romance. For hers was a tragic fate. The lover died on the very eve of her marriage, and poor Sophie, seeing nothing but blackness and social ignominy for her future, put an end to the present. She took poison and died. This was some time after the period we have reached in Mirabeau's life. It was when he sat as a deputy in the National Assembly, and when the news was brought

to him by a friend, while a debate was in progress, he rose with a troubled face, and, shutting himself up in his room, was not seen for several days. Sad and self-reproachful must have been his soul in those lonely hours when he was haunted by the ghost of a dead woman. It was he who had brought her to ruin and to this miserable death—the woman who had left husband and family to share his poverty and peril. Other women would come to him, the *roué* who had brief repentant moods and a constant consciousness of his own vileness, but the ghost of Sophie de Monnier would stand always between him and happiness.

After his trial at the Parliament of Aix, Mirabeau enjoyed, or at least possessed, an unaccustomed measure of wealth. Having attacked his mother's good fame, he afterwards went over to her side and defended her from the hatred of the wicked old marquis who was called the Friend of Man but had no friendship for the woman who was his wife. As a recompense for his powerful assistance in this domestic warfare, the marquise granted her son 21,000 livres on her estate. With this he plunged into dissipation and extravagance until he again became overwhelmed with debt. It was at this time that he made the acquaintance of another woman, who became more than the mistress of his passing pleasures; who was indeed, to some extent, the sweetest and most healthy influence of his private life.

Henriette van Haren, who afterwards called herself Madame de Nehra, was the daughter of a Dutchman, but thoroughly French by education and sympathies. When Mirabeau first gazed at her with his passionate eyes she was still a girl in years, though intelligent and serious beyond her age. She was leading a peaceful life, untroubled by passion, and her thoughts were turned to graver problems than in the province of girlhood. So it seems from what

we may read of her. To her friends it must have seemed incredible and horrible that she, of all girls, should fall under the spell of the great passionate man whose reputation with women was already an evil one. To Henriette herself the first sight of Mirabeau was a little horrifying.

'When I first met him,' she says, 'I thought his appearance was most unpleasing; I started back with repulsion. But, like many others, I not only by degrees became accustomed to his features, I even came to think them suited to his genius. His countenance was expressive, his mouth cheering, his smile very charming.'

The women of France before the Revolution had certain characteristics which made them remarkable. They were willing to sacrifice themselves for an idea, and to break the fetters of conventional morality without shame, and with a sense of pride in the virtue of liberty. Henriette van Haren does not seem to have been animated by any passionate love for Mirabeau. She knew his character and the vices of it. But she believed in his genius and believed also that she could guide and safeguard his genius by her womanly influence. Deliberately and with her eyes open she linked her fate with his, and to herself as well as to him promised to be faithful through adversity or peril. In after-days, when she was forced to abandon him owing to his incorrigible infidelities, she was able to write the following words with full sincerity:

'I sacrificed my quiet life to share the storms of his adventurous existence. I vowed to live with him alone, to follow him everywhere, to brave all if I could be of use to him in good fortune or bad. I leave the friends of Mirabeau to judge whether I faithfully fulfilled the task I deliberately undertook.'

Mirabeau himself acknowledged the fulfilment of that

pledge. He knew her to be the best woman of all those women whose hands he had clasped in his. While she lived with him he enjoyed his happiest period of clean domestic love. Even Sophie de Monnier had not been so much his wife and guiding spirit as Henriette.

'Dear love,' he wrote to her once, 'I have only had one happy day in my life, that on which I learnt to know you, that on which you gave me your friendship. No happiness is possible away from you. Every feeling, from the most trivial impression to the loftiest thought, which I do not share with you is worthless. Your absence deprives me of what is best in you. Were you to abandon me I might seek forgetfulness in dissipation, not to find pleasure, but death.' How well the man knew himself and his weakness! How accurately he foretold his fate! For when Henriette did abandon him, through his own gross faults, he did indeed plunge into an excess of dissipation and found his death. Well would it have been for France if Henriette had been at his side always to keep down the beast in him. The history of France might have been very different.

Mirabeau's increasing debts, and a quarrel which offended one of the King's ministers, made him fear the receipt of one of those *lettres de cachet* which had formerly cut him off from social life and work. He found it discreet to take a holiday in England. Henriette accompanied him, and made a favourable impression in the English circles, which readily received a nobleman whose writings were well known to students of French literature. He became intimate with Gilbert Elliot, afterwards Lord Minto, and with Lord Lansdowne and Romilly, from whom, with indefatigable curiosity and remarkable penetration, he acquired a really deep knowledge of English constitutional principles and procedure. He also haunted the House of Commons and heard many

debates which were invaluable to him afterwards when he became the greatest orator of the National Assembly. There is no doubt that this English experience strengthened his convictions in favour of limited monarchy and moderate liberalism, and it was from this inspiration of English ideals of individual liberty joined to loyalty to the Crown that he drew his policy for the government of France after the meeting of the States-General. Upon his return to Paris he became an energetic and industrious writer of political and commercial books and pamphlets, keeping his head above the deep waters of debt by this means, and steadily increasing his reputation as a powerful though unprincipled politician. During his exile in Switzerland with Sophie de Monnier he had made the acquaintance of the Swiss bankers and men of finance, among whom was Clavière, afterwards one of the leading Girondins and Financial Minister before the Reign of Terror. This man was now in Paris helping to pull the strings of the great financial speculations which at that time formed the newest game in gambling for society adventurers. He was a close friend with another Swiss banker who had come to Paris, a man named Panchaud, the chief wire-puller of the Stock Exchange and the great general of the army of sharpers who were bringing France to ruin. Panchaud was enormously wealthy and his house was thronged by men of title, ambition, and ill-repute, who came to him in the hope of making huge sums of money by buying stocks or selling shares according to the nod of their host, whose knowledge of national and international politics enabled him to turn the wheel of fortune with mysterious ease. Into this strange assembly of broken profligates, successful gamblers, licentious noblemen, blasphemous churchmen, and unscrupulous politicians Mirabeau was introduced by his friend Clavière. There he met Talley-

rand, the scoundrelly Bishop of Autun, and Lauzun, 'the Queen's lover,' as he had once dared to call himself, and now the pander of the Duc d'Orléans. Here, also, he met the Comte de La Marck, the staunch and true friend of the King and Queen, and Mirabeau's one best friend in future days when he stood between the Republicans and the Royalists.

For the Bishop of Autun he had nothing but contempt at this time, describing his loathing at 'a being so vile as Talleyrand, sordid, greedy and designing, who delighted only in filth and gold, who had sold his honour and his friend, and would sell his soul if a purchaser could be found for such vile trash.' He was not so violent against this subtle adventurer when the Bishop became the most powerful churchman in the National Assembly, and was ready to hold out the hand of friendship and co-operation, a hand which Talleyrand himself was not eager to grasp, believing himself strong enough to stand alone.

In the stock-jobbers' salon Honoré de Mirabeau was welcomed as a powerful adherent to their financial forces. Panchaud and Clavière, a lawyer named Duroverais, and other Swiss 'soldiers of fortune,' provided him with facts and figures, coached him up in financial principles and in the fine shades of financial morality, and Mirabeau, seeking the way to fame, if not to fortune, became the commercial bookmaker and pamphleteer of France. Under the guidance of his crafty friends he launched forth thunderbolts on paper at the financial follies of Calonne, the Minister of optimistic profligacy, and the careful financial schemes of Minister Necker, who was honestly doing his best to bolster up the crippled credit of France, but blundering very badly. With Mirabeau as his enemy, with the Panchaud-Clavière combination against him, he had to fight a losing battle. The credit of his famous Caisse d'Escompte fell heavily

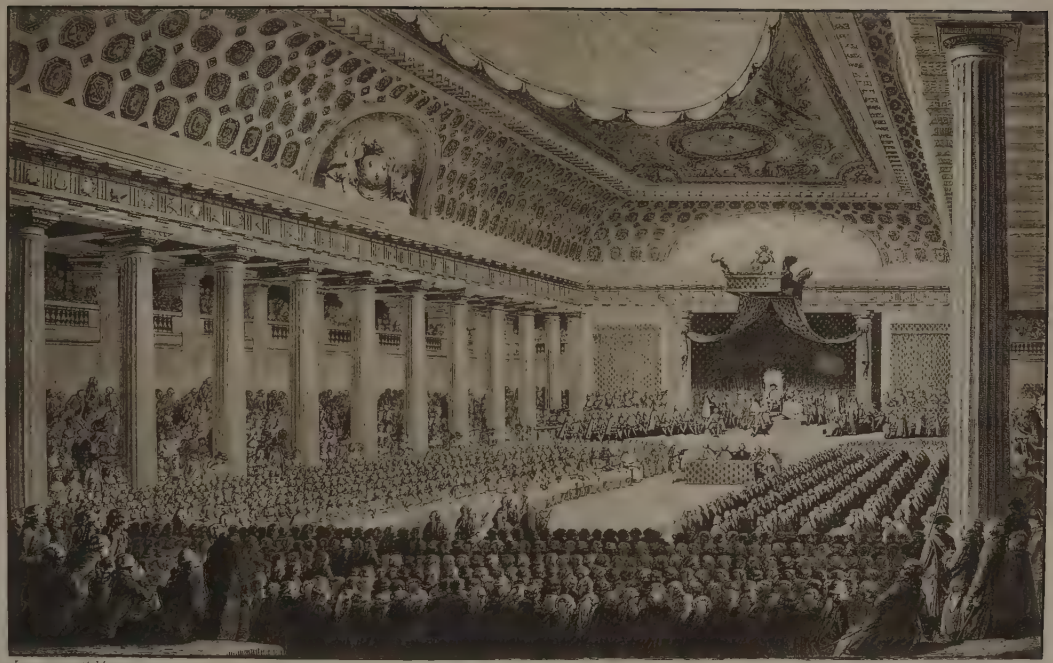
after one of Mirabeau's published attacks, and the shares of some waterworks, in which he was personally involved, dropped disastrously. There was a panic on the Stock Exchange which was taken advantage of by astute financiers who had pulled the wires, and Necker realised for the first time that Mirabeau would be better as a servant than as an opponent. The French Government bribed him over to their side by sending him on a secret mission to Berlin to report on the state of affairs at that Court. The information he obtained was admirable, but very dangerous. Upon his return he might have gained the complete confidence and admiration of the French Foreign Office under M. de Montmorin if he had behaved with discretion. But he committed what was an unpardonable crime in the opinion of his government. At this time he no longer had Henriette van Haren by his side to safeguard his honour and keep him along the straight road. Disgusted with his gross infidelities, she had left him for ever, and he was now in the hands of a low woman—the wife of his bookseller—who was a creature of sordid ambition and utter lack of principles. She knew the commercial value of his Berlin notes, and she was greedy for the gold. So she tempted him to publish them, and forgetful of his honour, amazingly careless of his reputation, he yielded to the temptation. The publication of this correspondence was an almost deadly blow, self-inflicted, to his political prestige. It not only horrified the Ministers who had been willing to promote him, but scandalised every man who had a vestige of political honour. It was this and not his private immoralities which caused the deputies to the States-General to regard him with coldly suspicious eyes. One may almost say that no man but Mirabeau could have survived in political life after such an attempt at moral suicide. Yet he did survive, and as the

year 1789 drew near and with it the assembly of the States-General, summoned as the last counsel of despair by Necker, Mirabeau did much to recover and to extend his reputation, not among the men of his own class, but among the surging masses of popular politicians, who, knowing little of his relations with the Ministry or with the nobles, read with exultation and glowing eyes the pamphlets which came unceasingly from his pen, calling for the overthrow of feudalism, demanding a liberal constitution, the abolition of class privilege, an equitable adjustment of taxation, liberty of conscience, of speech, and of the press, state education and other sweeping reforms. He at least had the courage of his convictions, and before his election boldly proclaimed that no assembly is truly representative unless it represents every individual in the State, and that every citizen must be either elector or elected. Aristocrat and profligate, what mattered it, when here on the printed page bearing his name there was the gospel of humanity and the voice of justice? When the States-General were at last convened, Mirabeau offered himself as a candidate to the nobles of Provence. They remembered the published letters and rejected him. Then, as said earlier in this chapter, he turned to the people, and with enthusiasm they elected him for both Marseilles and Aix.

Such, then, was the man upon whom the populace centred its gaze as the deputies passed on their way to the hall at Versailles. It may seem as if all this history of his private life is unnecessary in a book dealing with the French Revolution. But the private character of Mirabeau alone explains the motives for his public conduct. The man of many amours, the man who had seen so many prison cells, the orator in the courts of law, the prodigal, the debtor, the man who was hunted by both passion and poverty, must be known

to understand the Mirabeau who championed the people's rights against aristocratic privilege, who defended the royal prerogative against constitutional anarchy, who suits himself to the Court while being the leader of the revolutionists in the Jacobin Club, and who was always faithful to his principles, though he was sometimes false to his public professions.

On that memorable day of June 17, when the Third Estate constituted itself as the National Assembly on the motion of the Abbé Sieyès—that strangely silent and inscrutable man who occasionally, in his thin clear voice and philosophic manner, uttered words which changed the destinies of France—Mirabeau was still without influence among the deputies. He had not yet stepped forward with any claim to leadership. He attracted some attention when the name by which the Third Estate should henceforth be known came up for discussion. The Abbé Sieyès suggested the phrase 'the Representatives of the French nation,' but Mirabeau advocated the less grandiloquent title of the 'Representatives of the French people,' holding that it would give less offence to the nobles and would really be more accurate, as the deputies of the Third Estate represented the people of France, that is to say the democracy, and did not include the two privileged orders; the word 'nation,' on the contrary, including all of the three 'estates' of society. It was a small point, perhaps, but it shows the attitude of Mirabeau's mind and his strong sense of moderation. It also confirmed the suspicions of the wilder spirits of the Assembly that Mirabeau was not to be counted on as a leader of revolt against established authority. But it was not before six days had passed that the man's strength and sincerity were revealed. The scene is a familiar one: the tumultuous throng of excited though weary deputies who refused to leave the Tennis



Dessiné par l'Monet

OUVERTURE DES ÉTATS GÉNÉRAUX

à Versailles le 5 Mai 1789 .

Court in spite of the King's command for them to separate, and the figure of the gallant soldier, the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé, stiff and stately as became a royal messenger, who gave that mob of rebellious politicians the message he had received from his master and King.

The fear of royal vengeance, the sense of obedience to a royal command, were not yet dead in the hearts of these six hundred men who were afterwards to be the masters of the King. When the message was delivered to them in a voice of military command there was a dead silence, and some in that Assembly turned pale and trembled. Then suddenly the great figure of Mirabeau rose, and his lion's head was thrown back imperiously, his black eyes blazing with fire, his right hand stretched forward to the soldierly gentleman in the doorway. His deep voice resounded through the bare hall like a trumpet-call.

'Tell your master,' he said, 'that nothing but force shall remove us from this hall, and that we shall yield to no authority but that of bayonets.'

These words thrilled the hearts of that Assembly. All eyes were directed to the commanding man who stood like a statue cast in bronze, in defiance of the might of kings, and in defence of a people's rights. A deep murmur of admiration and applause broke in waves of sound throughout the great hall, and the words that still filled the ears of the deputies themselves were soon to be echoed in every hamlet of France. By that one sentence Mirabeau stood forward as the leader. By that one sentence he almost wiped out the stains upon his reputation. The Marquis de Dreux-Brézé saluted, and turning on his heel marched back to the palace of Versailles, where the poor weak King, hearing that the representatives of the people would not budge, sighed with the worry of it and said, 'Well, let them stay.'

Stay they did, and when they moved at last of their own free will it was to follow the King who had become their prisoner.

But Mirabeau, though he had championed the cause of liberty in a moment of national crisis, was no friend of anarchy, and no enemy of what he honestly considered to be the rightful prerogatives of kingship. The National Assembly had been reinforced by the liberal members of the two privileged orders: the nobles, led by Lafayette and the Duc d'Orléans, who was partly the pretender to popular power and partly the tool of his unscrupulous adherents; the clergy by Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, who saw his way to popular acclaim also by this means. Together in the Tennis Court the three orders were making believe to deliberate upon the form of a constitution for France, but in reality being swept onwards to anarchy by men who had no sense of order or restraint, but only an intense impulse to destruction. Mirabeau alone had the courage to preach moderation. Great in vanity as he was, and eager for power, yet his vanity and his ambition were caused by the consciousness of genius, not, as in the case of Lafayette, of Sieyès, of Talleyrand, of many others in the midst of this whirlpool, by a secret desire to play the saviour of France by pandering to passion and the folly of the hour. It was proposed that an elected Assembly should be formed with complete control of the legislature and administration, unchecked by any power of royal veto. Mirabeau rose and denounced such dangerous suggestions.

'I, gentlemen,' he said, in his grandest style of oratory, beside which the passionate incoherence of his fellow-deputies was feeble and unimpressive, 'I, gentlemen, think the veto of the King so essential a part of the constitution that without it I had rather live in Constantinople than in France. Yes,

Prieur. inv. & del

SERMENT DU JEU DE PAUME, À VERSAILLES

le 20 Juin 1789.

I protest that I can conceive nothing more alarming than the despotic oligarchy of six hundred individuals.'

For this he was howled down and almost lost his influence over the populace of Paris, who had acclaimed him as a hero. They did not understand the meaning of a veto. They had but a vague notion that it was some horrible form of tyranny which would come into their homes and tear them from their families. But in spite of this vagueness, or because of it rather, the Parisian mobs were shouting 'traitor' at those who advocated the royal veto over the legislature, and Mirabeau's name was sometimes suggestively coupled with the cry of '*A la lanterne!*' which had now become familiar in the streets of Paris. It must be admitted, however, that Mirabeau could utter words in the Assembly which would have cost other men their lives at the hands of the populace. The secret of his strength lay in his sincerity. That may seem strangely paradoxical, for in the Assembly itself he was always suspected as a traitor both by the revolutionaries and by the Royalists. They could not reconcile his sentiments of devotion to the King with his violence against the Queen and his defence of popular justice. It seemed to his fellow deputies that he was constantly shifting from one side to the other, never steering a straight course. This was true enough, but it baffled them only because they could not read the motives by which he was animated.

When the populace of Paris, stirred to a frenzy of enthusiasm by such tavern-table orators as Camille Desmoulins, hurled themselves against the grim walls of the Bastille and overthrew that stone symbol of despotism, murdering the governor and shedding the first blood of revolution, no man defended their action with more enthusiasm than Mirabeau, who horrified the Court party by this eulogy of anarchy, as it seemed to them :

'How great must be the virtue and moderation of the people,' he said, 'since even when the dungeons of the Bastille disclosed the secret atrocities of despotism they were not provoked to greater bloodshed! The oppressors of the people calumniate it, and affect to fear it, in order that they may excuse their tyranny and deaden their conscience. If these events had taken place in Constantinople we should say that this was an act of popular justice, that the punishment of one vizier would be a lesson to others.'

These were words which satisfied even the most ardent spirits inside and outside the Assembly, and words which made Marie Antoinette hate and fear the name of Mirabeau. Again, when under the Queen's influence and the pressure of the courtiers Louis XVI. decided to adopt measures of repression and reaction, concentrating some thirty thousand troops round Versailles to overawe the Assembly and even to disperse or arrest the deputies, Mirabeau was not slow to denounce this as an outrage, and to urge the King's advisers to abandon a policy which was both criminal and stupid.

'Have the rash and foolish men,' he said, 'who have misled the King studied the causes and the course of revolutions in the past? Have they seen by what fatal concatenation of circumstances the wisest are carried beyond the limits of moderation; by what dread impulse a frenzied people is hurried towards excesses from the first thought of which they would have shrunk in horror?' Again such words as these satisfied the people and angered the Court. Those who had cried '*À la lanterne!*' now shouted '*Vive Mirabeau!*' and little portrait busts of him were carried about the streets with those of the Duc d'Orléans, another popular hero at that time, especially after the famous day of the 5th of October when the rabble of Paris marched to Versailles and brought back the King and Queen in triumph to the

Tuileries. It was the duke himself who was popularly supposed to have organised that demonstration by lavish largesse and bribery, and there were people who vowed they had seen Orléans in the crowd. That, of course, was sheer nonsense, but evidence goes to prove that in these early days of the Revolution the duke was pandering to the mob, and engineering popular upheaval by subsidising the revolutionary pamphleteers, the gutter journalists, and the tavern orators. Such men as Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Sieyès, and Marat the People's Friend, were at this time in favour of placing Orléans on the throne as a constitutional King, or at least as a democratic Regent, and the bloated blackguard of the Palais Royal lay dreaming at nights of supreme power as the head of the State. But he was a pitiful plotter, treacherous and cowardly, and utterly incapable of leadership without the bolstering up of the astute men, like Talleyrand and Sieyès, who made use of his ambition to further their own ends, until they could afford to drop him into the caldron of popular passion. Mirabeau was supposed to be in his pay. But the fact is that Mirabeau knew the weakness and rottenness of the Royal debauchee and would have no compact with him. 'They pretend that I am of his party,' he said scornfully; 'I would not have him for my footman.'

Yet Mirabeau knew that he could not stand alone. Popular in the nation, he was not ready to increase his power over the people by urging them on to anarchy, and on the other hand he was shrewd enough to see that in the Assembly he was both suspected and hated. What he desired most ardently was a place in the Ministry with Montmorin, Necker, and Lafayette, a position which would give him a hold on the helm of State, and enable him to guide and restrain the course of events with more authority than he could ever acquire over the tumultuous Assembly. He held out the hand

of friendship to Lafayette, but it was not taken. He turned to Necker, but the Swiss banker considered his own virtue too immaculate for alliance with such a man. Gouverneur Morris, the United States Ambassador in Paris, who was the general adviser to all parties and persons, and who generally advised wisely, but quite in vain, was on the side of the angels. His Puritan temperament could not have any sympathy with a man of Mirabeau's repute, and he urged Lafayette in the strongest words not to sully himself by a partnership between honour and dishonour. Probably Lafayette's sense of virtue would not have been proof against Mirabeau's influence, had it not been for the jealousy and fear in his heart of a man greater than himself. His vanity was colossal, but it was the vanity of one who secretly knows his own weakness. He knew that if Mirabeau came into the Ministry he would be the first and the strongest man in France, and that thought rankled in his breast. But Mirabeau's efforts were unceasing to gain his end. Though he despised the marquis, he stooped to flatter him and wrote long and fulsome letters which Lafayette left unanswered. Then he tried plain words, with a touch of the bully in them, but that also was ineffectual. In one of these letters he was so candid that Lafayette must have burned with rage as he read the lines in Mirabeau's bold, scrawling hand.

'We live in a time of great events, but little men,' wrote Honoré de Riquetti. 'I am less than ever able to discover anyone with whom I should care to associate myself. I have always told you that the giddiness of your elevation and your fatal indecision in what concerned yourself blind you to the impossibility of perpetuating a state of things only to be justified by success. . . . Your liking for mediocrities and your weakness when your inclinations are con-

cerned will cause a career which ought to have been brilliant to end in failure, and endanger the Commonwealth by your ruin.'

In the Assembly itself Mirabeau tried to gain his ends by moving that Ministers of the Crown should be chosen from the legislature. He hoped that if this were carried his popularity would give him a place in the Government. But he underestimated the deep distrust with which he was regarded by his fellow deputies. Lanjuinais, afterwards one of the leaders of the Girondin party, and upon their downfall the bravest of them, sprang to his feet, denouncing Mirabeau's motion and even repudiating Mirabeau himself; strangely enough, however, in words which remain as the finest tribute to his opponent.

'You are dominated and carried away by a man of genius,' he cried. 'What would he not be able to effect if he were a Minister!'

An excited debate took place, in which Mirabeau saw that the majority were against him. Then, with bitter but brilliant irony, he moved an amendment, holding up to ridicule the personal animosity of his antagonist and surrendering himself with mock humility:

'This, then, gentlemen, is the amendment. I beg leave to move that the proposed incapacity to hold office should apply only to M. de Mirabeau, member for the city of Aix.'

But Mirabeau's whole measure was lost owing to the jealousy of the deputies against him and each other. It was a hard blow to him, which for a time cast him into impotent rage and despair. But, rejected by the Ministry and thwarted by the Assembly, he determined to obtain the power he sought by another means. He would become the guiding influence of the King and Queen.

It was not an easy thing to do. The King distrusted

him. The Queen both feared and hated him, and not without reason, for he had uttered words of violence against her reactionary policy which had inflamed the people's prejudice for her person. But there was a friend who was invaluable in bringing about an understanding between Mirabeau and the royal family. This was the Comte de La Marck, the trusted adviser of the King and Queen, He was the one man who, knowing all Mirabeau's vices, knew also the great virtue that was in him. He alone, and consistently, said that all those vehement words uttered in the Assembly on behalf of liberty were not out of harmony with the man's sincere belief in the necessity of a King who should be invested with real power, and that his desire to become a servant of the Court was not treason to his revolutionary principles. He knew what a difficult position Mirabeau had to maintain, struggling for predominance over the deputies and for popularity in the city, while endeavouring at the same time to act as a brake upon the rolling wheel of anarchy. De La Marck, strong in the conviction that Mirabeau alone could save the kingdom from utter chaos, exerted all his influence to break down the prejudice of the King and Queen for a man whom they regarded, and not untruly, as the most determined leader of the liberal movement. The fact that De La Marck advised them to buy the services of Mirabeau seemed a proof of his unscrupulous character. They could not understand that the need of money and the love of luxury which prompted Mirabeau to ask for wages in return for his services could go with high principles and courageous fidelity. Louis XVI. was first persuaded to put his trust in the orator of the Assembly. As everyone knows, the services of Mirabeau were bought and paid for—at a handsome price. He was to receive 200,000 livres as a settlement of his debts, 6,000 livres monthly, and four bills of 250,000 livres each

to be paid at the end of the session if the King were satisfied. Before the bargain was completed Mirabeau, at the King's request, was asked to write a profession of faith. It was a remarkable document that Mirabeau penned, and however we may abhor the taint of gold which infects his political career, it must be acknowledged that he was honest and candid in his professions. He was absolutely sincere when he assured the King of his devotion, founded on sympathy for his position, but still more because he knew that France could be saved only by restoring the legitimate authority of the Crown. He was perfectly candid in deliberately stating to the King that any attempt to bring about a counter-revolution would not be less dangerous than criminal. He solemnly undertook to use all his energies in order to put the control of the executive power in the King's hands. This also was consistent with the policy he had openly advocated in the Assembly. In conclusion he said, 'I promise the King everything except success, which one man cannot command, and which it would be rash and criminal for me to warrant when so terrible a fever undermines the State and endangers the monarchy.'

No slur may be put upon the memory of Mirabeau for such words as these, or for entering into private relations with the royal family. In this he was true to his principles, and he said no more and no less to Louis XVI. than he was willing to say and did say in open debate before the national deputies. Unfortunately, his lifelong embarrassments for want of money, the prodigious debts that hung about him and threatened his personal liberty, caused him to soil his hands, and perhaps to soil his soul as well, though not as much as his enemies would make out. Certainly his joy upon finding himself a wealthy man was so excessive as to disgust De La Marck himself. He lost his sense of dignity

and behaved with an abandonment of self-restraint. Yet even the Count, well as he knew his friend's genius and frailties, could not quite realise what this sudden *embarras de richesse* meant to a man who for years had been a prodigal on half-pay. Now at last he could give rein to his desires, and indulge his great appetite for sensuous delight. Rashly and dangerously he made a lavish display of his new-gotten gold, taking a new house in the Chaussée d'Antin and furnishing it with the sumptuousness of an Oriental prince, and giving nightly banquets to opera girls and other undesirable ladies. There was not a deputy in the Assembly who did not know that Mirabeau was in the pay of the Court.

Yet, somehow or other, it did not seem to damage him much, except with men of an exceptional sense of honour—and these were rare. Indeed from this time forward Mirabeau's influence in the Assembly steadily increased. It must be remembered that as yet the idea of a republic was limited to a very small minority. Indeed, it has been doubted by no less an authority than Camille Desmoulins himself, whether there were more than five republicans in the whole of France, and those would be found, if anywhere, among crack-brained youths who had been reading too much Plutarch! Desmoulins, Danton, even Marat were loyal to the monarchy until the end of 1792 and the beginning of the Reign of Terror. Therefore it did not seem a very damnable crime to receive a pension from the King providing the pensioner were the friend of liberty and the foe to reaction. Mirabeau, in spite of his compact with the Court, was still the courageous and eloquent advocate of liberal reform, and indeed, now that he had more power through his private relations with the King, his eloquence was bolder and more fiery on behalf of liberty than ever before.

In spite of the gold, he was never servile in his conduct

to the King. One of the duties he had agreed upon was to write secret notes to Louis containing information upon the situation of the moment, and advice as to the best methods which Louis could adopt for holding the loyalty of the French people. In these private letters Mirabeau showed a masterly knowledge of statecraft, and so far from proving him a traitor to the principles of the revolution they show his consistent and courageous endeavour to bring the King over to the side of liberty and progress. If Louis had followed his advice, and, taking his courage in both hands, had stepped outside the circle of his reactionary advisers, proclaiming his intention to lead the social revolution in his own person, France would have been saved from its Terror. Mirabeau had advised the King to leave his palace before he became a prisoner, and to retire with the Court to Rouen, summoning the Assembly to join him there, so that it might be free to deliberate beyond the fear of the surging, tumultuous, and threatening mobs which in Paris surrounded their debating-hall. To Rouen or to some other provincial town in the heart of France, said Mirabeau, but never towards the Austrian border, where the *émigrés* were plotting for a reactionary warfare. History tells that this wise advice was not followed, and the King's flight to Varennes and his subsequent return as a captive turned the tide of public opinion against the monarchy and made a republic inevitable. But that is later history. While Mirabeau was secret adviser to the Court there was still time to direct the tide of revolution into the safe, broad channels of constitutional liberty and order. The most dangerous enemy of Mirabeau was not in the National Assembly, but by the King's side. It was Marie Antoinette who used all her influence with Louis XVI. to urge him into repressive measures and reactionary plots. Surrounded by men like Count Fersen and the Prince de

Ligne, loyal friends but dangerous advisers, by women like the Comtesse de Polignac and the Princesse de Lamballe, devoted Royalists and the natural enemies of reform, by the crowd of hereditary courtiers whose pensions and places depended upon the maintenance of Court prerogatives, she was blind to the real meaning and might of the revolutionary movement, and believed that if the King would only be firm and resolute the democracy could yet be crushed. So that Mirabeau, with increasing chagrin and eventually with a gnawing despair in his heart, said that all his efforts to bring the King over to a consistent liberal policy were always frustrated.

He had not spared himself. The sins of his past were in some measure atoned by his heroic energies now. Day and night he laboured in a frenzy of industry to save France from anarchy and royalty from ruin. Nor was he single-handed. Although without a party behind him in the Assembly, he had gathered around him a little body of loyal and devoted friends who were content to efface themselves in order to serve and administer to the genius of their intellectual master. These—like Clavière the financier, like Étienne Dumont the essayist, like Duroverais the lawyer, like the Abbé Lamourette the liberal churchman, like Pelleux the private secretary and diligent provider of facts and figures, like Reybaz the Swiss economist, like de Comps his copyist —spent their days and nights in his literary workshop, writing the drafts of speeches and pamphlets which he infused with the fire of his genius and enveloped with the glamour of his name. Into all parts of France the pamphlets produced in this political factory were distributed unceasingly in the attempt to influence and organise public opinion, and not wholly in vain, for in spite of the firebrand Barnave, who endeavoured to govern the Assembly with counsels of violence,

in spite of the increasing exasperation of the French people against the *émigrés*, who were already enlisting the powers of foreign Courts for a reactionary warfare against their own country, Mirabeau still succeeded in holding back the tide of political ferocity. One of the greatest triumphs was the defeat of Barnave's motion that the right of making peace or war should rest with the Assembly, and not with the King. His stand against this measure showed the grandeur of his courage, for he risked all his popularity and his very life in opposing a principle so seductive to the pioneers of revolution. His speech on this subject was his finest effort of oratory. Listened to at first coldly, his words resounding above a low murmur of antagonism and resentment, he gradually dominated the Assembly by the majesty of his presence, the irresistible force of his eloquence, the sanity and logic of his arguments.

'Where one among you is urging deliberation his voice will be drowned by the shouts of those who are clamouring for war.' That was the text of his argument, and the truth of it prevailed, and amidst ringing cheers his amendment was carried. But outside, in the streets of Paris, there were now heard growls of 'Treason!' and again the ominous words '*À la lanterne!*' were followed by the name of Mirabeau. Marat, the People's Friend, accused him as a reactionary and a paid Royalist, and Marat was becoming the rock of revolution.

But Mirabeau was not faint-hearted. He knew well enough that he was playing a dangerous game, but he played boldly and for high stakes. His greatest object now was to win the confidence of the Queen, to enlist her on the side of constitutional reform. After many vain efforts he at last succeeded in obtaining an audience with her. It was on July 3, 1790, that he drove in a close carriage, with his nephew

du Saillant disguised as postilion, to the château of St. Cloud. It was a perilous adventure. If he were recognised he would be denounced in the Assembly and perhaps torn to pieces by the mob. But all went well, and in the gardens of St. Cloud he had a long conversation with Marie Antoinette. According to Madame Campan, to whom the Queen described this historic interview, 'she accosted him by saying "With a common enemy, with a man who had sworn to destroy monarchy without appreciating its utility among a great people, I should at this moment be guilty of a most ill-advised step, but in speaking to a Mirabeau," &c. The poor Queen was delighted at having discovered this method of exalting him above all others of his principles, and in imparting the particulars of the interview to me, she said, "Do you know that those words, *a Mirabeau*, appeared to flatter him exceedingly?"' We have no record of what Mirabeau told the Queen, but there is no doubt that he urged her to accept the principles of a constitutional monarchy, to use her influence with the King in order that he might stand forward as a liberal sovereign, and to turn a deaf ear to the advisers of reaction. It is probable that the Queen agreed to accept his counsels, for on leaving he bent low over her hand, and in a voice of passionate exultation said, 'Madam, the monarchy is saved!'

At this moment Mirabeau may be excused for his sublime self-consciousness. If the Queen had kept faith with him loyally the monarchy might indeed have been saved. But Marie Antoinette was too enslaved by the traditions of a supreme sovereign power to be faithful to the new order of popular liberty. More than ever she drew closer to the extreme Royalists, and adopted their advice against that of Mirabeau and the friends of reform.

Mirabeau saw the falseness of his temporary illusion, and

now perhaps for the first time realised the hopelessness of his task, the failure of his ambitions. Yet he made a brave fight still. In the Assembly his eloquence still swept down the opposition of his political enemies. In December 1790 he was elected president of the Jacobin Club, which was now beginning to be stronger than the Assembly itself as the expression of the national ideals ; and in spite of the determined opposition and influence of Lafayette, on January 30, 1791, he was elected President of the National Assembly. It is a little difficult to reconcile his appointment to these highest posts in the nation with the enmity and distrust he still inspired among the most determined demagogues. It must be remembered, however, that the moderate or Girondin party of the nation were still in the majority, and that Marat, Danton, and the most advanced Jacobins had not yet come to the forefront as the apostles of Terror. But probably the real cause of Mirabeau's new powers was the occasional outbursts of violence and democratic passion which, in both the Assembly and the Jacobin Club, he thundered forth with startling and terrifying eloquence. The moderate men were won over to his side by the consistent courage with which he defied the advance guard of anarchy. The thorough-going revolutionaries were satisfied by the vehemence with which he denounced the attempts at counter-revolution. Those who, like Marat, suspected or accused him of treason were not numerous enough to make their voices heard.

Mirabeau was the greatest man in France in the spring of 1791. He had the Assembly under his control, he had the confidence of the people, he was the secret counsellor of a ministry who were ready to accept his advice on foreign affairs. His only weakness was the enmity of the Queen. But when at last the power for good was in his hands, the

evil that he had done in the past now seized upon him and destroyed him. A life of debauchery had gradually ruined the constitution even of this physical and intellectual giant. Ill-health prostrated him, his sight became dimmed, and though he struggled with heroic courage to fulfil his great mission it was a fight with death. His last speech in the Assembly was to defend the rights of private property in mines. It was a question that closely affected the interests of his greatest friend, the Comte de La Marck, and he debated it with an enthusiasm and passion inspired by the chivalry of friendship. Upon returning home he sank down exhausted, with the words 'Your cause is won, but I have got my death-blow.'

As he lay dying, and his physician Cabanis gave him no hope, his bedside was surrounded by the little band of friends who had served him so loyally. They wept, not only for Mirabeau, but for France. He, too, with a sublime egotism that was not mere vanity, discoursed upon the national tragedy which would be caused by his departure from the arena. 'I carry with me the ruin of the monarchy,' he said on the last day. 'After my death factions will dispute about the fragments.' His dying was dramatic. All his life he had a relish for playing the leading character and getting enjoyment even out of tragic emotions. So now all his sentences, breathed out in dying gasps, were oracular sayings, prophetic epigrams, phrases that should be worthy of remembrance, worthy of a genius and a hero. One of his friends pulled back the curtain of his window, so that he could see the sun for the last time. 'If that is not God it is his cousin,' said Mirabeau. At last speech failed in him, and after some hours of agony he wrote on a slate, 'Sleep. I wish only to sleep.' On April 2, 1791, Honoré Gabriel Riquetti, Comte de Mirabeau, slept so well that he would never

wake again in this world. He was buried in the Pantheon amidst a nation's mourning, his funeral procession being four miles long. There was only one discordant note in the universal homage. Marat, in his newspaper *L'Ami du Peuple*, rebuked the French people for bemoaning the death of a traitor. Two and a half years later Mirabeau's remains were disinterred from the Pantheon and cast into a common graveyard. His communications to the King had been discovered in an iron chest at the Tuileries, and not Marat only but every democrat cried 'Traitor!' at his memory.

CHAPTER V

LAFAYETTE AND THE NATIONAL GUARD

THERE were many tragedies in the French Revolution, as many almost as the men who made it. Of all those who had high expectations when the opening of the States-General seemed to promise a speedy reign of liberty, of profitable labour and social progress, there were few, if anyone, who lived through the Revolution without shattered hopes and bruised or broken hearts. But no tragedy was so pitiful or so complete as that of poor Lafayette. His was the most deplorable failure. The aristocrats, who lost their heads because they were aristocrats, the patriots who went singing or scoffing to the scaffold, were to be envied by that republican aristocrat and royalist patriot who muddled his way through revolution to the ignominious safety of a foreign prison, and to an old age filled with bitter memories and pathetic disappointment. History has been hard upon him, and will always be hard, for nothing may cover up or hide away his failure. But truth is not less cruel because it must be told, and Lafayette's fate not less pitiful because it was deserved. The failure of goodness and of honour is much more tragic than that of wickedness and treachery. The men who took the part of the devil in the Revolution could go to the guillotine with much more satisfaction than Lafayette went to his Austrian prison. They had had their feast of blood, and that the knife should be turned on them at last was a reasonable thing. Men who fight behind barricades expect

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to get shot, and a murderer who plays the game boldly should not cry out against the eternal justice when he is brought to the block or to the halter. The men and women of the Revolution who deliberately and consciously gave up their God for a while to do devil's work, who in the frenzy of a great madness abandoned their humanity with an exquisite joy in brutal instincts, were not as a rule surprised or hurt by the justice of the violent deaths that overtook them. They had had their game, and the forfeit must be paid.

But Lafayette was in a different case. He had not shared the joy of emancipation from the ordinary laws of civilised life. The beast in him had never leapt into his brain and throttled his instincts of righteousness. He was always a good man, correct in virtue, with a coldly puritanical nature, and with fixed ethical principles from which he was never liberated for the necessary and bloody evils of revolution. This was the cause of his failure and of his tragedy. He failed because he could never find a practical bridge to span the gulf between the laws of righteousness and his great ideals. A river of blood must run within that gulf, and no engineering of God or man could build a bridge. The river of blood must first be made and then be forded by those who would cross from the kingdom of weak despotism, corrupt wealth, and starving poverty, to the free republic of equality and social justice. The blood of a royal family, not tyrants or criminals, except by office, must help to make that river; the blood of an aristocracy, not all essentially vicious or evil, except by a false arithmetic of social economy, must swell that stream; and the blood of parties and patriots, at war with each other over methods and means, must pour into the gulf before the people could pass across its rocky bottom. But Lafayette had no understanding of this. He stood on one side of the gulf, straining his eyes to that far republic on the other shore,

and believing that he was destined by the Almighty to build a bridge by ethical laws upon which the people could pass over singing the harmonious hymns of peace, with himself at their head on his white horse, holding aloft the flag of liberty. That was the vision in his brain when he was called to the Assembly of Notables in 1787 and first sat in the National Assembly of 1789. His theories were all republican. At twenty years of age he had been the first to offer his sword to the Americans in their fight for independence. Leaving his young and saintly wife, who loved him with far more passion than his somewhat cold heart could ever return, though his domestic life was morally blameless, he had disobeyed the commands of the King, who had no liking for rebels, and crossed over to the New World to meet the great-hearted Washington, who was organising a victorious army out of ragged volunteers. The young Marquis de Lafayette took his part gallantly enough, though not revealing any great military genius, in the dangers and hardships of Washington's campaigns. He returned to France after the battle of Brandywine, but was back at Washington's side again six months later when England had declared war against the French allies of her rebel colonists. With Washington he endured the long hardships of the Valley Forge, where the American general held the line of the Hudson River, with a dwindling, ragged, half-starved and frost-bitten army, shamefully neglected by Congress and kept loyal only by the warmth of Washington's enthusiasm, by his stern discipline, and by the real love he had for his soldier lads. In this long time of dreariness and Spartan endurance, more heroic than the courage of battle, Lafayette shared the watches of his general, and for long hours Washington, the grave, blunt-speaking and earnest Virginian gentleman, who was quietly altering the

history of the world, would discuss the problems of warfare, of European politics, of social morality, of religious dogma, and of his great republican ideals, with the young French nobleman who had left the glitter and glamour of his Court for the austerities of a great rebellion. Lafayette was young, and full of youth's enthusiasm, and with youthful capacity for hero-worship. It is natural that Washington's personality should have dominated his imagination, and that the American general's simplicity of thought and speech should have fixed his own principles and moulded his own manners. Washington's Puritanism appealed to the temperament of the young marquis, who belonged to a family which, in spite of its adherence to the Catholic faith, was also Puritan in its type of virtue and strict piety. And Washington's ardent love of liberty kindled the warmest fire that ever burnt in the cold heart of the French marquis. But the American ideal of liberty, restrained under the most rigid laws of theological authority and of civic order, was absolute in its difference from the primitive impulses of wild licence which were stirring in the sap of the French nation. The Americans desired to exchange foolish laws and foolish fealty for reasonable laws and obedience to those appointed by themselves. But in France, underneath all the classical philosophy of academic gentlemen like Sieyès and Condorcet and Roland, there was the surging up of the natural primitive man in the hearts of the great multitude whose aim, conscious or unconscious, was to free themselves from all law, to rid themselves of all necessity of obedience, and to destroy all authority. This difference of ideal was partly the secret of Lafayette's failure to get any grip upon the reins of revolution. He came back to France with the outward austerity of the American patriot, though with all the vanity of the Frenchman. With the American type of a republic secretly

cherished in his brain, he believed that the American idea of liberty was essentially the same as that which before and after the States-General made every peasant a politician and every politician a philosopher. Until the mob began to massacre he believed that the French could form a republican constitution with the same grave and orderly conduct as the gentlemen of Congress. When Foulon was butchered in the streets, and the bloody heart of Berthier was brandished before his eyes, it was, with his ideals, as if a pack of cards had tumbled about his ears. He was bewildered and mortified, and quite incapable of picking up the broken threads of his political philosophy. His American experience was fatal to him in more ways than one.

Upon his third visit to America in 1784, after the conclusion of peace with England, he had made a triumphal tour through the new Republic, hailed as champion of liberty and as a heaven-sent general. And when he had returned to France he was the idol of all French gentlemen, who envied his glory and exaggerated it; of all the ladies of France, who caressed him as a conquering hero; and of the people, who applauded him for his undisguised republicanism. This flattery inflamed his vanity, and at the beginning of the Revolution this poor stupid and well-meaning man could not rid himself of the belief that God had gifted him with genius, and that he was destined to be the Washington or the Cromwell of his own nation.

It was Lafayette who led the liberal nobles to join the Third Estate in the Tennis Court and helped to form the National Assembly, and on July 9, 1789, he laid on the table a declaration of rights based on Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. Early in July he was made vice-president of the Assembly, and it seemed to this honourable, egotistical gentleman that he was master of the fate of France. But

on the 11th of that month the King dismissed Necker and the Ministry, and two days later Lafayette learnt, not without a nervous shock, that France might have another master, stronger than himself—the People. Camille Desmoulins had called them to arms, and the Bastille fell before their enthusiastic rage. But Lafayette, like the other liberals of the Assembly who disapproved in theory of popular violence, was willing enough to take advantage of its triumphs when achieved. After all, this victory over the grim fortress of ancient despotism had been almost bloodless, and Lafayette was not yet shocked out of his republicanism. He sent the key of the Bastille to Washington as a precious relic that had unlocked the door of liberty to France. Then, on the 16th of the month, he went with the eighty members of the Assembly, sent by the bewildered King from Versailles with messages of good will to his good people of Paris. In the streets of the city and at the Hôtel de Ville that deputation was received with a riotous ovation. Not yet had 'the good people of Paris' learnt contempt for an Assembly which afterwards seemed to them so impotent in all but words. At the Town Hall the question was discussed of raising a citizen army for the security of Paris under the title of the National Guards, and this having been decided it was asked who should be the leader. A bust of the young Lafayette, the champion of American freedom, stood in the hall, and a speaker stretched out his arm to it with significant gesture, and looked from the portrait to the living man. It was enough. The fiery glance of Moreau de St. Méry inflamed the imagination of the crowd, and with one shout of approval Lafayette was nominated commander-in-chief of the volunteer army. With Bailly, who at the same time was elected mayor of Paris, he was taken to Notre Dame, and there, in the dimness of the old cathedral, listened with a cold

face, but with a throbbing pulse, to the swelling chant of the *Te Deum* sung in his honour, and to the thunder of the people's cheers and of the city's cannon booming without. As he sat there, the chosen leader of Paris, his dreams of glory seemed accomplished, and in his *tête montée* there surged a thousand thoughts of vanity and self-complacency. As commander of the National Guard he seemed now a very Cromwell with the dictatorship of France, and in the Assembly he believed himself to be as powerful, though he was but a puppet dancing on the stream of Mirabeau's mighty eloquence. They were his happiest days ; the happiest days of all the Revolution. The moderate men still cherished their ideals and believed in the victory of bloodless liberalism, and the enthusiasm of France was very young and fresh in this spring-time of the great change. On August 9 it seemed, indeed, as if the millennium had come, when the Vicomte de Noailles ascended the tribune and proposed the abolition of all feudal privileges, and of all monuments and titles of nobility. In a fervour of self-sacrifice, and with tears of joyous enthusiasm, the nobles accepted this social revolution, and cast their ancient rights into the melting-pot of democratic liberty. The Marquis de Lafayette was not a laggard actor in this scene of sacrifice. It was with absolute sincerity that he renounced his title and his tithes, and from that time onwards he dropped the noble ' de,' and was plain Lafayette. But with the morrow came the awakening. The people of Paris were growing hungry, and there was no bread for them. Hunger makes men savage, and Marat, the People's Friend, was asking why they were so patient. If they could not get bread they would have heads, and the murders of Foulon and Berthier were the first-fruits of the bloody harvest that was to be reaped before many days had passed. Those murders, and other riots of the people

that showed their temper, were the first warnings to Lafayette, plunging him into pessimism and weak inconsistency. He was troubled, and, with the vague rumblings of popular upheaval in his ears, wondered whether it was in him to lead a Revolution. To mark his disapproval of mob-law he resigned his command of the National Guard, which had failed to stop the murders, but it was only a formal protest. He quickly resumed his generalship by the unanimous desire of the citizen soldiers. For a time he blinded himself to omens of trouble, and played the ostrich with his intelligence. He believed he held the friendship of the Court as well as the love of the people. Yet he was distrusted by the King and hated by the Queen, and scorned by the royalist nobles, while on the other side Marat was accusing him in 'The People's Friend,' a paper that was quickly becoming the voice of the Parisian mob.

Events moved fast, and Lafayette had no control of them. At Versailles the King was wavering between liberal concessions and reactionary plots, until the starving Parisians of the slums were maddened by the rumours of that banquet, when the Flanders regiment, in a night of enthusiasm, paid too much homage to the Queen, and raised the white cockades of the old *régime* above the tricolour of the new nation. It was then that the patience of the people was abandoned in rage, and that ten thousand hungry and savage women set out, in the darkness of an October dawn, to trudge through the rain and mud along the road from Paris to Versailles, there to ask the Assembly what they were doing that the people starved, and then to clamour at the door of the palace where were still being given banquets for which the people paid.

Lafayette, as commander of the National Guard, was responsible for the safety of Paris and the Court against

the violence of the city mobs. But though he knew of this wild procession before it had yet started, he did nothing but send a warning note to the palace. He was bewildered, utterly perplexed. He had become the chosen leader of the people's army, and he feared to lose his popularity by thwarting the people's will. And yet—the King and Queen? Who could say whether those wild women, with their strong, bare arms, would not tear to pieces the bodies of those to whom they had gone to ask for bread? It was late in the day when Lafayette at last decided to follow the market women, and, getting on to his white horse, put himself at the head of some battalions of the National Guard and set off for Versailles. He reached the palace at eight in the evening, after that wild day's work, when the Assembly had been invaded and when the women had shrieked themselves hoarse under the windows of the palace. Lafayette placed his guards about Versailles, and then, quite satisfied that nothing else would happen that night, went with a calm conscience to the Hôtel de Noailles and so to bed.

Everyone knows that something did happen that night, that the palace of Versailles was invaded by savage men and women, that the royal bodyguards were struck down by the mob, and that the King and Queen escaped death by only a narrow margin of good fortune.

Lafayette arrived on the scene, behind the time as usual. He has been accused of treachery, but it was only plain stupidity and that utter lack of imagination which was the ruin of him. When the Queen was summoned before the mob he kissed her hand before them, and at least we may allow him that he saved her from further violence. But he was impotent in the hands of his own men and of the women who demanded that the royal family should

Prieur inv. & del

LES DAMES DE LA HALLE PARTANT POUR ALLER CHERCHER LE ROI A VERSAILLES

le 5 Octobre 1789.

go back with them to Paris. As commander-in-chief he had no more influence over these events than if he had surveyed them from a balloon in mid-air, and his weakness was now fully revealed to all except himself. Perhaps, also, in his own heart he knew his weakness, and despised himself for it. That knowledge of his own weakness was in fact part of his frailty. He would have blundered better if he had not been so self-conscious of his shoddiness. From this time onwards he was timid and hesitating in his political conduct, with only spasmodic periods of decision. In this he closely and curiously resembled the King himself, though his lack of definite policy was due to different causes. The King was timid in using violence against violence because he strongly disliked shedding the blood of his people, and his temporary actions of repression were forced upon him by the Queen, who had the stronger mind. But Lafayette was the victim of his popularity, and feared to risk it by maintaining order with the strict discipline that was natural to his military training. Although a republican in theory, he became more and more royalist in his leanings when he saw how republicanism in practice could only follow anarchy, from which his soul revolted. As the people became more threatening he withdrew his sympathy, until at last he had crossed right over to the side of reaction. Yet his personal vanity so consumed him that he could never bring himself to forfeit the people's favour by open opposition, nor the favour of the Court by open enmity, and stood playing the game of make-believe to himself and others, posing as the defender of the Crown, the champion of liberty and the idol of the people, when the Crown distrusted him, when liberty was betrayed by him, and when the people had dethroned the idol from his place in their imagination, putting Marat up instead.

If Lafayette had had any military genius, or any touch of that personal grandeur which makes men leaders of men, he would have made his National Guards an irresistible force in Paris, by which he might have held the mob in check and made liberty possible by maintaining order. The National Guards were largely recruited from the *bourgeoisie* of Paris. After the fall of the Bastille it had been a fashionable thing for the young men of the city to enrol themselves into that civic force. It was the only passport to the ladies' favour, who would not give their smiles to anyone who had not this guarantee of patriotism. It therefore contained a large body of respectable men who, though friends of liberalism, had also instincts of orderliness and decency. With such men Lafayette might have guaranteed a peaceful revolution if he had handled them wisely and well. But he desired to be popular rather than obeyed—a fatal philosophy for any military commander; and by looseness of authority, and by appointing officers who had no military talent or training, he allowed the riffraff in the regiments to gain the upper hand, until the whole of the National Guards became demoralised and undisciplined.

Gouverneur Morris, the American representative in France, who was a household friend of the Lafayettes, gave strong and sturdy advice to the commander-in-chief, and urged him, above all things, to discipline his troops. If Lafayette expected to lead them by affection, he said, he would be their dupe. 'So far he accords,' writes Morris, in his Diary, 'but on the subject of discipline his countenance shows the self-accuser, for he has given the command to officers who know nothing of their business.'

Some weeks later, when the populace had made rioting a habit and hanging of aristocrats a hobby, Morris again returned to the charge with Lafayette. The latter, in the

candour of his friendship, admitted to the American that he had the ambition to be generalissimo of the French forces, with the power of dictatorship. That candour would have cost him his head, if it had gone further than Morris, who was seriously disquieted by the words. 'I tell him,' he writes, 'that he ought to discipline his troops, and remind him of a former question, viz. whether they would obey him. He says they will, but he immediately turns round and talks to some other person. Here is a vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself. This man's mind is so elated by power, already too great for the measure of his abilities, that he looks into the clouds and grasps at the supreme. From this moment every step in his ascent will, I think, accelerate his fall.'

Again Morris in his wonderful Diary analyses the man whose lack of moral strength was so fatal to the cause of liberty. 'He is the lover of freedom from ambition. But there is one ambition born of pride, the other of vanity, and he partakes most of the latter.'

Lafayette's utter lack of statesmanship was fully revealed to his friends when he was asked to form a ministry. With his habitual desire to trim his sail to all winds, he conceived the idea of selecting a man out of each party to form an 'all-the-talents' cabinet. Morris laughed at him, protesting that half the men he named were completely ignorant of administration.

'*Eh bien*,' said Lafayette, with that deficiency in a sense of humour which made him guilty at times of sheer stupidity, 'we must give each of the incapable ministers a clerk who understands affairs.' To Morris this ludicrous suggestion was astounding. 'You can't have clerks in a Cabinet Council,' he said.

But Morris himself was not always sound in judgment,

and he did unfriendly service to France when he dissuaded Lafayette from entering into alliance with the great Mirabeau. To his Puritan mind the private vices of Mirabeau could not be overlooked even for the sake of his genius for statesmanship. 'If you go into the ministry with Mirabeau,' he wrote to Lafayette, 'every honest man will ask himself the cause of what he will call a strange coalition. There are in this world men to be employed and trusted. Virtue must ever be sullied by an alliance with vice, and liberty will blush at her introduction if led by a hand polluted.'

Lafayette, who was almost as much a Puritan as Morris himself, was much moved by these words, but on the other hand Mirabeau had an all-commanding position, at this time, in the Assembly and at the Jacobins, and Lafayette was tempted to make an ally of him. Mirabeau himself, though he despised the marquis with the contempt of a strong man for a weak one, realised Lafayette's influence as commander of the National Guard and as the leader of the liberal nobles. He coerced himself into holding out the hand of friendship, but although Lafayette consented to some private interviews his respectability was too much for Mirabeau, and his manner was cold and uninviting. Mirabeau spoke plainly and urged more violent measures against the powers of reaction. But his words only increased Lafayette's antipathy for the man he believed to be a scoundrel. 'Such measures,' he replied, in a freezing tone, 'cannot be used by an honest man.' Mirabeau was touched to the quick, and flamed out into a sarcasm that has lived in history. 'An honest man!' he exclaimed. 'Ah, Mr. Lafayette, I see now you want to be a Cromwell-Grandison! You will find out what such a mixture will make of you!' The man of genius had summed up the character of his opponent in a phrase that was sublime in its piercing truth. Cromwell-

Grandison! The nicknames fitted Lafayette like a skull-cap, and he could never shake it off. In another interview Lafayette alluded to the silly rumours that Mirabeau was plotting against his life. Again Mirabeau's scorn leapt out at him. 'Now, my good fellow,' he said, his large face stamped with the image of contempt, 'do you believe that sort of trash? You wish to play a sham part in the Revolution.'

Such interviews could lead to nothing but complete estrangement and enmity, and Mirabeau henceforth had no relations with the man he derided as a tailor's dummy.

In the meanwhile things were going from bad to worse in France. The provinces were in a state of insurrection, and the flames of burning châteaux rose like warning beacons to the sky. In Paris itself the mob was becoming uncontrollable, and in the National Guards there was continual insubordination and a disposition to go over to the side of anarchy. Lafayette was bewildered and frightened. Afraid to take the responsibility of stamping out the popular anarchy, he shuffled out of it and took refuge in a policy of inaction, suggesting to his commanding officers that they should act alone, according to their own judgment as events occurred. It was a deliberate surrender of authority. To Morris he turned for advice, and that usually clear-headed man risked his friendship by some plain and downright speaking. In his Diary he relates the scene with a vividness that makes a picture of the shifty anxious general listening with a gloomy face and down-turned eyes to the stern rebukes of the sturdy American.

'Lafayette,' he writes, 'asks my opinion of his situation. I give it, *sans ménagement*, and while I speak he turns pale. I tell him that the time approaches when all good men must cling to the throne; that the present King is very valuable on

account of his moderation ; and if he should not possess too great authority might be persuaded to grant a Constitution ; that the thing they call a Constitution, which the Assembly have framed, is good for nothing ; that as to himself his personal situation is very delicate ; that he nominally but not really commands the troops ; that I really cannot tell him how to establish discipline among them, but that unless he can accomplish that object he must be ruined sooner or later ; that the best line of conduct, perhaps, would be to seize an occasion of disobedience and resign, by which means he would preserve a reputation in France which would be precious and hereafter useful.

'He says that he is only raised by circumstances and events, so that when they cease he sinks, and the difficulty comes in how to excite them. I take care not to express, even by a look, my contempt and abhorrence.'

How startled would Lafayette have been could he have seen that 'contempt and abhorrence' in the soul of his friend! If he was conscious of his weakness, and those words quoted above leave us with no doubt of this, he seems to have had no glimmering notion of his own dishonour. He still posed before the mirror of his mind as a high-souled gentleman, unstained by any moral blemish, and virtuous even in his political ambitions. And yet his weakness amounted to dishonour, for he played the friend of both parties, and betrayed them both. It was not without justice that the royalists distrusted him, for he had deliberately lagged behind when the mob had marched to Versailles and it was as his prisoners that the King and Queen had been brought to Paris. And they were still his prisoners, treated with little respect by his National Guards when they were closely held in the Tuileries. When the plot was on foot for the escape of the royal family to Varennes it was Lafayette

that the plotters had to fear, and that he should have been surprised and mortified by the Queen's dislike of him is a curious revelation of his peculiar mind.

Again, that the people learnt to regard him as an enemy was not less reasonable. For when the King had accepted the Constitution, and under the influence of the Queen straightway used his new liberty and authority to establish a new reign of reaction and to defy the democratic progress of the Revolution, it was Lafayette who was most severe in silencing the expression of the popular will by declaring war against the revolutionary journalists and orators, and by establishing an elaborate organisation of police espionage. No one may blame the out-and-out royalists for their plots against the forces of revolution, and no one may deny the right of the honest revolutionists to oppose or crush the privileges of the monarchy and nobles.

That was playing the game in an honest fashion. But in this record honour is not to be maintained by supporting two opposite sides in a deadly battle, and Lafayette lost not only his reputation, but his honour also, in attempting to be a royalist-republican and a republican-royalist. When, finally, on the open plain of the Champ-de-Mars, his National Guards shot down an unarmed crowd of Republicans, he was known at any rate to be a traitor to the principles he had so often proclaimed, and his insincerity was evident. This action ruined him. Marat, Danton, Desmoulins, Robespierre, and all honest democrats could not forgive that unnecessary crime against the people. They marked him down as one of the worst enemies of liberty, and that the Girondins accepted his services when they came into power was a blot upon their record for which heavy punishment would be exacted.

In 1790, upon the advice of his friends, Lafayette retired

to his country estate at Lagrange, abandoning the political career in which he had shown such an utter lack of statesmanship. He emerged from his retreat when the Girondins, disregarding the threats of Robespierre and the 'Mountain,' gave him the command of the army of the Ardennes, with which he won a few indecisive victories. During his long campaign Lafayette strained his ears to catch the echoes of the ominous events which were taking place in far-off Paris, and every breeze brought him rumours of riots and insurrections, of danger to the monarchy and of violent accusations against himself. At last his anxiety and anger reached such a pitch that, disobeying his military instructions, he left his army and proceeded post-haste to Paris, where, before the bar of the Assembly, he had the hardihood to denounce the Jacobin Club and the revolutionary attempts against the Constitution. It was a rash and foolish action, yet there was something in it of heroic folly, and one is tempted to forgive much of Lafayette's previous weakness and stupidity for that one hour when he faced his fate and, taking his stand firmly at last on one side of the Revolution, spoke out the convictions of his heart. The Assembly listened to him respectfully, but very coldly, and if he had stayed in Paris for more than a few hours he would never have left it alive. But he rode back alone and miserably to his camp in the Ardennes, fired with the one poor hope that he might persuade his soldiers to follow him back again to the capital and to crush the power of the 'Mountain.' It was a forlorn hope, and it failed. His young soldiers were enraged at his proposal, and to save his head he mounted horse and galloped into the neutral territory of Liège. On reaching the Austrian advance posts, to his surprise and humiliation he was arrested and treated as a prisoner of war, remaining in close confinement at Olmütz until Napoleon

obtained his liberation in 1797. And so, in the strong words of Mr. Hilaire Belloc, who gives a glimpse of Lafayette's career in his biography of Robespierre, 'ended in Austrian prisons the revolutionary career of the most patriotic, liberal, vain, sincere, and courageous noodle that ever boasted quarterings or gloried in constitutions and top-boots.'

CHAPTER VI

THE PEOPLE'S FRIEND

THERE has been more violent rhetoric pronounced upon the character of Jean Paul Marat, the editor of *L'Ami du Peuple*—from which title he was called, even by his enemies, 'The People's Friend'—than upon any other man or woman of the Revolution. Within a few months of his death his memory became monstrous, a legend of diabolical darkness and uncanny horror, the most loathsome type of that Terror which for a time dominated the imagination of the French people, working madness in their brains. History became fabulous when dealing with his life and work. Plain facts were distorted, and where fact was lacking invention filled the gap with falsehood as darkly shaded as the rest of the story, so that one of the most eminent physicians of his day became the 'horse-leech' of Carlyle's prose epic, and the man who for a time was the idol of the people became an 'obscene spectrum,' a 'homicidal maniac.' The pendulum of historical opinion has swung backwards, and some of the odium that had been heaped on Marat is now cast upon the early historians. Mr. Belfort Bax, his latest biographer, alludes contemptuously to 'the lying Carlyle,' and attempts to cleanse the 'obscene spectrum' so that he may stand out in his pages as an heroic figure, a man of sorrows, sublime in his courage and in his energy, as wise as the serpent, as innocent as the dove—'an exceptionally noble and disinterested character.' It is probable that with this argument,

Duplessi-Bertaux

JEAN PAUL MARAT

as with most cases in which men take opposite sides, the truth of the matter lies somewhere in between. The Marat of such historians as Michelet and of Carlyle's flamboyant romance has been proved a somewhat exaggerated portrait. Yet the Marat of the later apologists, and of such enthusiasts as Mr. Belfort Bax, is absurdly 'whitewashed' and idealised. If, without prejudice and with an open mind, one reads the host of contemporary memoirs in which the People's Friend is described with the vivid touches of many pens that build up a living portrait, it is impossible to imagine Marat as the noble hero, *sans peur et sans reproche*. Rather he becomes in one's imagination the living type of the French people in revolution, possessed by all the virtues of passion as well as by its vices—courageous as men will be when death is a small price to pay for the working out of an ambition that is national rather than personal; courageous as animals have courage when hunger or ill-treatment unleashes their ferocity; suspicious and cunning, because surrounded by superior forces and unknown evils; cruel because only by bloodshed and terror did it seem possible to reach the great ideal of human happiness; violent, ruthless, passionate with hate against those whom he believed to be the friends of tyranny and class cruelty, yet with a heart beating to the rhythm of humanity and filled with an ardent, an almost fierce love for the downtrodden, the outraged, the hungry ones of the earth.

Marat at least had the virtue of being consistent. During the course of the Revolution covered by his life, he had the relentless consistency of Fate itself; he was like a river in torrent, sweeping onwards with an irresistible instinct of destruction, bursting down barriers, unchecked by obstacles or wreckage, blind to human life, resistless in its force, terrible in its ferocity, unswerving in its direction towards

the great sea. Marat alone was consistent as the spirit of the French people, as the strong tide of liberated impulse for freedom which was stronger than all the intellect and the political strategy of their leaders, stronger than all the idealism of the revolutionary philosophers, stronger than the accidents of fate and chance which stirred the surface of the revolutionary tide, but did not check the onward flow of its deep waters. Desmoulins had none of this relentlessness of nature. His audacity was intellectual, not instinctive. His attacks upon the moderate side of the Revolution were partly spiteful and partly the result of vanity. They were irresponsible and insincere, and he was bitterly remorseful when the seeds he had sown were harvested in blood. Danton, even though he had the sincerity which Desmoulins lacked, was not consistent, for when the tide of the Revolution, which he himself had undammed, was sweeping onwards with the inevitable logic of blind force, he jumped to the bank and stood gazing at the blood-stained stream with horror and remorseful pity, and in the loneliness of a derelict. Marat went with the tide of popular passion, rejoicing in its swiftness, exulting in its force, never hesitating about its meaning or conclusion. The frenzy of the people was in his own heart and brain, and the underlying motive of the Revolution, acting beneath political and individual effort, was clear to him and convincing.

His biographers have seen only one side or the other of his nature. They have not seen that the extremest contrasts worked together in him. Those who believe in class privilege have denounced him as a man of remorseless cruelty, those who hate the privileges of class have reverenced him as a man of unbounded charity. The truth is that charity and cruelty were twin spirits in his soul. His heart was moved with compassion for the suffering of the poor and

oppressed, with fierce hatred for those who endeavoured to sustain the crumbling ramparts of despotism, or whom he suspected of so doing. He would be melted at the cry of a hungry child, he would rejoice at the bloodshed of a reactionary noble, or a 'moderate' citizen. He was the champion of woman's rights, but he made war on women who belonged to the old order of aristocratic privilege. He longed for universal liberty, peace, and happiness, but he was ready to wade knee-deep in blood if that was the way to his desires. He was a philanthropist and a homicide, a religious teacher and an apostle of assassination. He had a heart big with love, but he established a Reign of Terror in which hatred was king and tyrant.

'An exceptionally noble and disinterested character,' Mr. Belfort Bax calls him. We may not admit the nobility, but he was certainly disinterested. For the sake of his ideals he gave up reputation and comfort, fortune and ambition, for extreme poverty, ignominy, disease, incessant toil, and every kind of hardship, in which the danger to his liberty and life was perhaps the least of evils. Carlyle's magnificent romance, magnificent in spite of its inaccuracy, deliberately gives its readers the impression that Marat was a man of no distinction and of low-class occupation. The truth is, as is now well known, that Jean Paul Mara, as his name was originally spelt, was the son of a well-to-do physician of Cagliari, that he studied medicine in Paris, Holland, and London, that after a distinguished career in medicine and scientific philosophy he was made an honorary M.D. of St. Andrews University, and that returning to France he was appointed in 1777 to the distinguished position of brevet-physician of the guards of the Comte d'Artois, afterwards Charles X. This office he held until 1786, during which time he further increased his reputation by scientific

theories and discoveries in optics and electricity. He was therefore a man of means and of considerable distinction in the intellectual world of Paris. During his sojourn in England he had studied the principles of our constitution, and, like Mirabeau, was inspired by them with firm convictions of the value of constitutional liberty. But he was not an uncriticising admirer of the English system of government. He saw that even in England of those days class privilege was stronger than democratic rights. Two publications produced by him at this time foreshadow all his subsequent philosophy, and in his 'Philosophical Essay on Man' and his 'Chains of Slavery' we find the first principles of the revolutionary socialism which he afterwards expounded with such terrific force in the numbers of his paper, *L'Ami du Peuple*. When France was stirred to its depths by the summoning of the States-General, Marat had no doubt of his mission. He threw down the lancet and his optical instruments, and, taking up his pen, flung himself fiercely into the war of pamphlets which then raged over the country. In September of 1788 he established the paper which was to be the most formidable and most popular literary power in France. It was first called *Le Publiciste Parisien* but after the sixteenth number this was changed to *L'Ami du Peuple*, a name which appealed straight to the hearts of a nation in revolution, and became his own title of honour when all other titles had been abolished.

Upon the summoning of the States-General, Marat had been appointed to the Comité des Carmes, one of those committees of the sections of Paris whose nominal duty consisted only in electing representatives to the Third Estate, but who remained in permanent session to watch over the behaviour of their deputies and to discuss the affairs of the nation. They became in fact little Parliaments, and their

influence was often predominant over the National Assembly itself. After the oath in the Tennis Court, Marat proposed to the Comité des Carmes that they should establish a printing press and authorise him to publish a newspaper, chronicling the events of the Revolution and representing the views of their section. This was refused, upon which Marat angrily resigned his position on the Committee and carried out his idea with his own resources and single-handed.

'The People's Friend' soon obtained a hearing in Paris above the attention attracted by the host of newspapers and pamphlets devoted to the Revolution. It was not, strictly speaking, a newspaper at all, but rather what would now be called a 'leading article' upon passing events, with correspondence columns open to the grievances and the opinions of the public. Marat, indeed, was the originator of that newspaper 'feature' which is now so common under the heading of 'Answers to Correspondents.' In the same way that gentle readers are now advised upon the art of cleaning their teeth, upon the rules of etiquette, on the uses of advertisement, Marat advised them how to break 'the chains of slavery,' how to get justice, how to suffer 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.' These correspondence columns in *L'Ami du Peuple* are, to use a modern journalistic expression, real 'human documents,' and give one a remarkable insight of Parisian life during the Revolution. Runaway nuns, seduced women, ill-treated sailors, tyrannised servants, all kinds of persons who had a grudge against authority or force appealed to the People's Friend, and he dealt with their cases as from a tribunal of justice. But this was the lighter side of the paper, a 'popular feature' as it would now be called in journalistic slang. His leading articles were more important, and from the very first engines of war. 'My friends have done their utmost to prevent

me from writing on current affairs,' he says in one of his early numbers. 'I have let them scream and have not feared to lose them. Finally, I have not hesitated to set the Government against me, the princes, the clergy, the nobility, the *parlement*, the badly disposed districts, the *états-majors* of the mercenary guard, the councillors of the courts of judicature, the advocates, the procurators, the financiers, the speculators, the depreciators, the bloodsuckers of the State, and the innumerable army of public enemies.' In the early stages of the Revolution, when many of the most democratic leaders believed that a liberal constitution would be granted by the King and received by the people without the need of bloodshed, Marat was already sounding the alarm against 'the enemies of the people,' visible and invisible, and preaching the need of vigilance over the representatives of the people, of vigilance and suspicion.

On July 14, when the Bastille was taken by assault, Marat, who was in the streets at nightfall, was able to unmask a plot to bring foreign troops into Paris. A detachment of German cavalry had entered Paris by dusk and the commanding officer was haranguing a multitude round the Pont Neuf when Marat approached. The speaker announced that his men formed the advance guard of many regiments of dragoons who were marching on Paris to join the good citizens and fight on their side. Hoarse cheers greeted his words, but suddenly the officer's bridle was seized by a strong hand and a harsh voice addressed him. 'If what you say is true, dismount your troop, give up your arms to the people and receive them again at the country's hands.' It was Marat who spoke this bold challenge, and perhaps he was very near death then. We can imagine that officer, with his hand on the hilt of his sword, resisting the soldier's instinct to strike down an enemy in the path, resisting it with quickly

drawn breath, and eyes that saw in the sudden suspicion of the crowd a signal of danger. The commandant of the city guard, who rode with the troop, expostulated with Marat, calling him a visionary. Marat responded by calling him a fool. Then he turned to the crowd and denounced the cavalrymen as traitors and enemies. 'They have come to strangle us in the night,' he shouted. The accusation worked upon the nervous emotion of a mob that had achieved a stupendous victory during the day and had smelt the blood of Frenchmen. These German mercenaries would have been stoned to death or torn to pieces if they had attempted to ride over the man who now accused them. Cheers had changed into groans and curses, and the officer of the dragoons did well to turn tail at the bidding of the commandant of the city guard and lead his men to the municipality. Here, however, they refused to lay down their arms, and they were therefore sent back to camp under a strong escort.

This dramatic little episode, suddenly startling the silent night, shows Marat as a man of action, but although in the future he was to be for the most part a recluse and a man of letters, the characteristics of that adventure belonged also to his writings. When night had fallen and most men were asleep, Marat was awake and vigilant. When men came with fair promises to the people, Marat said, 'Prove your faith!' When the paid servants of royalty protested that they were on the side of the people and had come to liberate them from their oppressors, Marat cried out, 'They have come to strangle you!'

It was this continual harping on the string of suspicion, this constant tocsin of alarm, this repeated accusation of treachery, which exasperated and terrified the half-and-half reformers and aroused the admiration of the mob. The people of revolution, not the intellectual theorists nor the

vainglorious politicians, but the people who were hungry for food and for liberty, were themselves deeply suspicious, and treachery was their nightmare. They knew their ignorance, and their very helplessness in all but brute force, which after all is not, as they felt rather than knew, the greatest force in life. They were therefore both confiding and suspicious at the same time. They were easily beguiled into hero-worship by any clever phrase-maker like Necker or Lafayette, and they were carried away with enthusiasm by such men of mastery and eloquence as Mirabeau or Danton. But suspicion was always in the background ready to leap out like a tiger even upon the very men who had received the popular homage. They were so ignorant, so timid of losing by the strategy of intellect what they had gained by animal courage, that when an accusation of treachery was made against anyone in power they were always ready to believe the accuser rather than the defendant, whatever the evidence might be. This was how both Marat and Robespierre gained their power, but while Marat acted from conviction Robespierre was merely cunning when he pandered to the suspicious instincts of the people by protesting that: 'I see plots everywhere.'

Yet Marat was not completely the type and expression of the revolutionary instincts of the people, because with the same suspicion he had none of their enthusiasm. This was his greatest weakness, and indeed his vilest quality. A man may be forgiven fierce passions which lead him even into bloody crime, if accompanied or caused by generous impulse; but it is more difficult to forgive a nature which is always suspicious, always calculating, always sneering, and never moved by a touch of generosity or spontaneous praise for the heroism or the gallantry of its enemies.

When, on August 4, a frenzy of fine enthusiasm took

possession of the liberal nobles in the Constituent Assembly, who vied with each other in sacrificing their feudal rights and privileges, renouncing the abominations of the *corvée* and of the game laws, abandoning all their mediæval claims upon the service and property of the peasants, and in an exultant spirit of renunciation shed tears of joy at their own generosity, France, and indeed the whole of Europe, was filled with amazement and moved to admiration. But Marat alone was cynical and suspicious. Not a single thrill of sympathy for this spontaneous abnegation stirred his sullen spirit.

'Let us not be dupes,' he wrote. 'If these sacrifices were the result of benevolence, it must be confessed that the voice of benevolence has been raised rather late in the day. *Eh bien!* When the lurid flames of their burning mansions have illuminated France, they have been good enough to give up the privilege of keeping in fetters men who have already gained their liberty by force of arms. When they see the punishment of robbers and extortioners and the creatures of despotism, they generously abandon their seigneurial tithes and give up bleeding wretched people who can barely keep body and soul together. Upon learning the names of the proscribed, and the fate in store for them, they allow us the favour of abolishing game-preserves, and thus permit us to prevent ourselves from being devoured by wild animals. We may admit that they have been animated by virtue instead of fear, but let us agree that the meaning of these sacrifices, which have been so lauded in the first moment of enthusiasm, has been exaggerated!'

Marat's arch-enemies at this time were Lafayette, the commanding officer of the National Guard, and Bailly, the Mayor of Paris. Bailly he rather despised than hated, believing him to be a poor creature in the hands of Lafayette, and a dryasdust scientist who would have been far better

employed in studying the course of the stars than in pretending to shape the destinies of a nation. But Lafayette himself he hated with the bitterest animosity. He denounced him at first by covert allusion, and afterwards openly and violently, in *L'Ami du Peuple*, as a traitor and reactionary, a friend of despotism masquerading as the champion of liberty. He hit the bull's-eye of truth with such envenomed arrows that Lafayette was eager for vengeance against the persecutor who threatened to drag him down from his pinnacle of popularity. Lafayette's admirers in the Assembly were equally angry with the People's Friend, and as yet Marat had not the strength of the people behind him as in later days. He was accused as a dangerous demagogue, both in the Assembly and by one of the district committees, to the municipality of Paris. Lafayette and Bailly were at the head of the municipality and took this opportunity of calling Marat to account. It was on September 25 that the People's Friend obeyed the summons and presented himself at the Hôtel de Ville. He was kept waiting five hours without being interrogated, and returned home to comment furiously in his next day's paper upon the grievous waste of his precious time, and to announce his intention to remain at home until further orders. A few days later he received a second summons, and again showed 'the same deference to these gentlemen as before,' by surrendering himself at the Hôtel de Ville. At the same time he accused the authorities of violating the liberties of the subject and of the press by having caused certain numbers of his journal to be seized from the hands of the newsvendors by the military patrols. 'Read, blind soldiers,' he wrote, 'these writings whose healthy influence you arrest, and shudder with horror at being the instruments of tyranny in crushing your only defender!'

Marat was this time questioned by Bailly the mayor, who peered with his dim astronomer's eyes into the face of the man who wrote such violent audacities against his authority. Mildly enough he told Marat that he had been denounced by the district of the Filles de St. Thomas for articles likely to destroy the civil authority. Marat answered by impeaching his accusers as stock-jobbers and financial rascals—'men who live on other people's ruin and drink the blood of the nation.' It is evident that Bailly himself was afraid of this journalist whose tongue was as sharp as his pen, and that among a minority at least of the councillors who took part in the interrogation there was a secret sympathy for the accused. One of them rebuked him for writing in a way to destroy confidence in the Assembly which was working for the reformation of society, but at the same time he admitted his belief in the purity of Marat's motives. This admission stirred the People's Friend with lively emotion, and he broke out into an *apologia pro vita sua*.

'Can you doubt my purity of heart?' he said. 'I will not tell you how austerely I live in my humble retreat since the loss of my little fortune, how for nine months I have kept to bread and water so that I may pay for my printing expenses, which are enormous, so that I may devote my pen to my country. But what other motives than the pure love of humanity would inspire a man of intelligence, who has no ambition, no party, no intrigue to serve, who works to play no active part before the public, to put himself in danger from the revengeful blows of the scoundrels he tracks down, to sacrifice his livelihood and yield himself up to death?'

Nothing was done this time to interfere with Marat's liberty, and he returned to his lodgings as determined as ever to be the watch-dog of the Revolution. When the market-women marched on Versailles besieging the palace,

invading the Constituent Assembly and threatening to tear the royal family to pieces if they would not come to Paris and give bread to the people, Marat was in the turmoil. Camille Desmoulins describes how he 'flew to Versailles and returned like lightning, making as much noise as four trumpets of the Last Judgment summoning the dead to rise.' It was not long after this event, which filled Marat as well as the people of Paris with a curious sense of satisfaction in the possession of the royal family, that the People's Friend was again in danger from the party of Lafayette. This time he was accused to the Court of the Châtelet, a kind of French 'Star Chamber' for the trial of political offenders. A warrant for his arrest was made out, but Marat successfully evaded it for some little time. A body of Lafayette's police arrived at Marat's house, but he had had previous warning and the door was strongly barricaded, while a body of citizens formed a guard of volunteers in the street, ready to defend their champion against his enemies. The police, who could not get through the door, hammer as they might, seem to have been overawed by the demonstration, and Marat was eventually escorted by a crowd of friends to Versailles, where he appealed to the protection of the Assembly. It was a bold but adroit manœuvre. A dramatic appeal to the self-constituted guardians of the people's liberty could hardly be refused by them, even though in their secret hearts they feared or despised the plaintiff. They depended for their power upon the people's favour, and they could not damage their reputation by setting themselves directly in the face of a popular verdict. Marat again triumphed, but Lafayette and his friends were indefatigable in their desire to have vengeance on this man who denounced them as reactionaries and sluggards. Marat was in hiding in a cellar at Montmartre to which he had secretly conveyed

his printing-press. But police spies were hunting Paris for him and were soon hot on the scent. Early on the morning of December 12 there came a banging at the door. Marat opened it in his shirt and was confronted by twenty armed men.

'What can I do for you, *messieurs*?' he asked.

'We have come to arrest you.'

Marat scrutinised the order, and seeing that it was technically correct asked permission to dress. This was granted, and the prisoner, as he now was, accompanied his escort to the law courts. His arrival was somewhat early, and he accepted a cup of chocolate from his guards while awaiting the officials of the court. Then he was questioned closely as to his movements in Paris, his answers being frank and unreserved, until at the end of the interrogatory there was a movement of excitement and a hush of expectation as General de Lafayette entered. It was an historic meeting. We can imagine the slight handsome figure of the Marquis, correctly clad in his uniform of the National Guard, his clear-cut, cold, and seemingly impassive face, glancing nervously under half-veiled lids at the slovenly, unkempt, hawk-nosed, beetle-browed man with the smile of arrogant scorn and bold eyes that flashed defiance. Marat tells us very little of what took place between them. Lafayette, weak and indecisive as he always was, does not seem to have known what to do with this deadly opponent now that he had got hold of him. He asked him what quarrel he had against his staff. 'I will answer that in the next number of the *Ami*,' said Marat. That was all. Lafayette must have faltered before those searching cynical eyes. Unlike most vain men, he had the additional weakness of knowing his own utter incapacity for his responsible position. He passed Marat on to the Commission of Police for a further

interrogatory. The People's Friend made it the occasion of an oration, asked the good policemen, who rebuked him mildly for his violence, whether they thought a revolution could be accomplished without a few drops of bloodshed, or whether one could avoid being disagreeable when tyranny had to be attacked. His arguments seemed so reasonable to the company that they applauded him as a good fellow and sent him off with their blessing. Marat had triumphed again, and he now felt so secure that he went boldly to Lafayette and demanded the return of the printing-press which had been confiscated on his arrest. Having obtained this, he left his cellar at Montmartre, and set up his business in a street close to the Cordeliers' Club.

But Lafayette, balked though he had been by his own timidity, was not the man to give up his desire for vengeance. By means of his secret agents he endeavoured to destroy Marat's favour with the people by spreading abroad the rumour that the *Ami du Peuple* was in the pay of Royalists and reactionaries. It is somewhat surprising that the plot did not succeed. The Parisians were so suspicious of treachery that they almost doubted their own shadows of playing a double game. However, it was really ludicrous to think that the violence of the People's Friend, who clamoured for the punishment of all those who lagged behind the chariot wheels of liberty, could mask an agent of royalism. For once common-sense prevailed. Lafayette, defeated in his strategy, must rely on force again. Bailly, the mayor, authorised him to take three of the most trustworthy battalions of the National Guard to effect the arrest of the man who had the people on his side. In addition to these three thousand horse and foot, other battalions were marched into the district of the Cordeliers. It was a supremely farcical business, this march of an army for the arrest of a prematurely aged man

whose only weapon was his pen. It reveals the state of nerves from which Lafayette and his party were suffering. It is also a tribute, though absurdly exaggerated, to the popular power supposed to be behind this revolutionary journalist. It is evident, of course, that Lafayette and the Mayor of Paris feared the rising of the quarter in which the Cordeliers' Club, of which Marat was a member, was an insurrectionary stronghold. They were not only afraid of Marat, but they feared the eloquence of Danton, the impetuosity of Desmoulins, perhaps, even, the sudden revolutionary fervour of Mirabeau, those three pillars of the Cordeliers, which, if Marat were arrested, might lead to a popular outburst of violence in which Lafayette, Bailly, and the moderate men would be engulfed and swept away. Nothing of the kind happened. The truth is that Marat was by no means beloved even in the Cordeliers' Club. There was nothing in common, or very little, between his savage cynicism and the dauntless enthusiasm of Danton, nothing akin to his glowing passion of hatred for men of hesitation and timidity in the emotional idealism and intellectual malice of Camille Desmoulins. The Cordeliers, therefore, were not disposed to sound the tocsin for their Marat, and at this date the Parisian populace, though well-disposed towards the People's Friend, were not so much his worshippers as to rise in revolution on his behalf.

Lafayette's battalions, therefore, picketed quietly in the streets, and drew a cordon round the quarter without encountering anything more annoying than the scoffings of many night prowlers who gathered round them. Then, as dawn broke, some officers of the law, with a fine show of courage, broke into Marat's house, sword in hand. The bird, however, had flown, and their storm of courage had to be expended upon inanimate things, such as printing-presses, furniture,

and files of newspapers, which they destroyed with a ferocity which they no doubt considered a synonym for heroism. Marat himself was safely lodged with a friend in a neighbouring street, having, as usual, had previous warning of his danger. When the news was brought to him by a servant that his own house was surrounded by an army he was perfectly cool, and, according to his own account, collected. His hosts, husband and wife, were terrified, but he regarded the affair as a huge joke. Wrapping himself in a cloak and putting on a 'round hat,' he sallied forth with a friend and passed, without attracting notice, through a detachment of the guards sent to arrest him. That evening he spent at another friend's house, in excellent humour, until a sudden clatter in the street warned him that his sanctuary had been discovered. Upon peeping through the blinds, he saw that the house was invested by agents of police. His friends urged him to escape by way of the roof, but with supreme audacity he passed out in broad daylight on the arm of a young companion and walked leisurely away from the spies whose eyes seem to have been at the back of their heads. He proceeded to the house of another trustworthy acquaintance, but did not find anyone at home. It was a disaster, for the spies and soldiers were again hot on the scent. His companion began to shed silly tears, but Marat cheered him up by a burst of hearty laughter. He succeeded in obtaining shelter under the roof-tree of another convenient friend, but meeting there an acquaintance of whom he was rather doubtful he found it necessary to cover his nervousness under simulated gaiety until he could whisper to his host if he was sure of the man. 'As of yourself,' was the answer. Marat was satisfied, and continued the conversation with a lighter heart. Soon after he had been in bed, however, he heard the clatter of hoofs again. Perhaps that man had

not been so much to be trusted after all! It seemed all up with Marat, but for some reason or other the soldiers sat in their saddles without dismounting, and Marat, getting tired of watching them, tumbled into bed again. But early next morning he left the house of danger, and, with the cunning of a detective in fiction, eluded his enemies, got clear of Paris, and found safety at last in London.

When the hue and cry for him had quietened down, he stole back to his former haunts and Paris was startled by the old cry of the newsvendors '*L'Ami du Peuple! L'Ami du Peuple* de M. Marat!' Once again the People's Friend uttered his warning cries for vigilance and energy and thoroughness, and impeached the authorities of the municipality, of the National Guard, and of the Assembly itself as laggards in the progress to liberty. One danger to Marat had been removed. The power of the Court of the Châtelet had been broken up by the successful attacks of the Cordeliers' Club, led by Danton, whose legal knowledge and dialectical skill had assailed the jurisdiction of the Court with irresistible effect. But Lafayette had by this time drifted steadily back on the stream of reaction, and, perceiving with increasing terror the dangerous shoals which threatened the ship of state along the tideway of the Revolution, was endeavouring feebly but desperately to anchor in mid-stream. The return of Marat troubled him exceedingly, and with more consistency than he had shown in any other aim he hunted the People's Friend with relentless, unceasing enmity. For more than two years Marat's life was a continual game of hide and seek, with death as the probable forfeit. Often, as he said, he was unable to sleep for two consecutive nights in the same place, and encompassed by spies, police agents, and paid assassins, he skulked from one hiding-place to another, often half-starved, always in miserable ill-health,

ragged, dirty, and pitiful in appearance, but unfailing in energy, indomitable in courage and fired with intellectual passion. Sometimes lurking in the cellars beneath the Cordeliers' Club, sometimes cowering in the quarry pits of Montmartre, obliged even, it is said, to hide in the sewers of Paris when no other sanctuary could shelter him from hot pursuit, he led an underground life, emerging at rare intervals into the sunlight with blear eyes and corpse-like face. The dampness of his cellars and hiding-holes had racked his bones with ague. The darkness of these temporary workshops, illumined only by guttering candles as he wrote his political tirades, had weakened his sight, and his eyes were ringed with inflammation. The pestilential atmosphere of the sewers in which he had taken refuge had infected him with a loathsome skin disease, making his naturally ugly face hideous and horrible. Diseases of other kinds had clutched hold of his body, torturing him with the ingenuity of devils. The poor wretch paid a heavy price for his convictions and for his altruistic ambitions. If he had been born with a nobler appearance and had not been so ill-mannered his life would have inspired poets to heroic lays, and his self-sacrificing patriotism would have aroused the admiration of posterity. But popular enthusiasm is seldom lavished upon disagreeable men who look horrid with greasy rags round their heads, and in disreputable clothes. The world likes its heroes to be clean and spruce and picturesque, with a happy knack for phrase-making. Lafayette will always be loved by the ladies because he was 'such a gentleman.' Marat has been hated more than he deserves, because he looked like a scarecrow and was seldom polite.

To men of letters, or at least to those who have written to the throbbing of the printing-press, it is not Marat's least

claim to honour that in spite of his rat's life underground, in spite of being hunted day and night by Lafayette's dogs, he should have succeeded in writing and publishing his journal with almost unbroken continuity. Journalistic enterprise has seldom succeeded in the face of such dangers and difficulties! It is still a mystery how the man baffled his enemies, and, when one printing-press was broken up or confiscated, found another to roll off copies of his famous sheet. Doubtless this hunted life was partly responsible for his increasing bitterness and violence. A man does not write placid amiabilities when he is racked by suffering and hiding in dark holes.

The numbers of 'The People's Friend' and the supplements to that journal which, with insatiable energy, he issued from time to time during this period of his life, were unsparing in denunciation, immoderate in their ferocity of eloquence, and free from any touch of timidity. He attacked the administration and the personal character of Necker, the finance minister, accusing the popular idol of having gambled in national funds to increase his private fortune, and of having favoured a political reaction by deliberately causing a famine in the country owing to a ruinous tax imposed on the poor. When Necker resigned, his immense self-conceit crushed at last by the unmistakable evidence of his failure to guide the destiny of his adopted nation, Marat wrote his epitaph in words of stinging scorn.

Mirabeau was another butt for his barbed arrows. He was the first publicly to proclaim the bargain that had been made between the marquis and the Court party, and he contrasted the former poverty of the great orator with the sudden affluence which enabled him to live in luxury and keep three mistresses at least in splendour. The People's Friend saw only the venality of Mirabeau, and nothing of

his sincere desire to found liberty upon the structure of the old *régime*. Between Marat the relentless demagogue and Mirabeau the liberal Royalist there could be no treaty of peace, and when the man who had sworn to save the monarchy went to his grave without having time to fulfil his oath, amidst the mourning of the people who had believed in him, the People's Friend was not of those who said *De mortuis nil nisi bonum*. Mirabeau, he said, was 'a born lackey of the despot,' and his attacks upon the Court had been mere blinds to obtain the suffrage of the people. To him was due the reactionary law which gave the 'veto' to the King; it was he who had allowed the nobles to emigrate from France so that they might plot against the nation on foreign soil, and he had used his talents a hundred times to keep the force of authority in the monarch's hands. 'Beware of prostituting your incense!' cried Marat. 'Keep your tears for honest champions.' At that time the treaty between Mirabeau and the Court had not been revealed, and Marat's denunciation alienated many of his sympathisers, but when the secret was discovered afterwards in the iron box in the Tuileries Marat's words were remembered, and Mirabeau's bones were taken from the Pantheon, where they had been buried in honour, and scattered shamefully in a common graveyard.

So Marat went on, unsparing and untiring, in his denunciation of the counter-revolution which, under Lafayette's leadership and with the support of the moderate party in the Assembly, was undoubtedly endangering the new-born liberties of the French people.

When it was learnt that the Court of Vienna was negotiating for a passage of Austrian troops through France, on the pretext of marching to Belgium, Marat wrote his famous pamphlet '*C'en est fait de nous*,' sounding again the tocsin

of terror and calling the people to arms. It was then that he wrote those words which have been used as the proof of his bloodthirsty passions. 'Five or six hundred heads lopped off,' he said, 'would have assured you repose and happiness; a false humanity has restrained your arms and suspended your blows; it will cost the lives of millions of your brothers.'

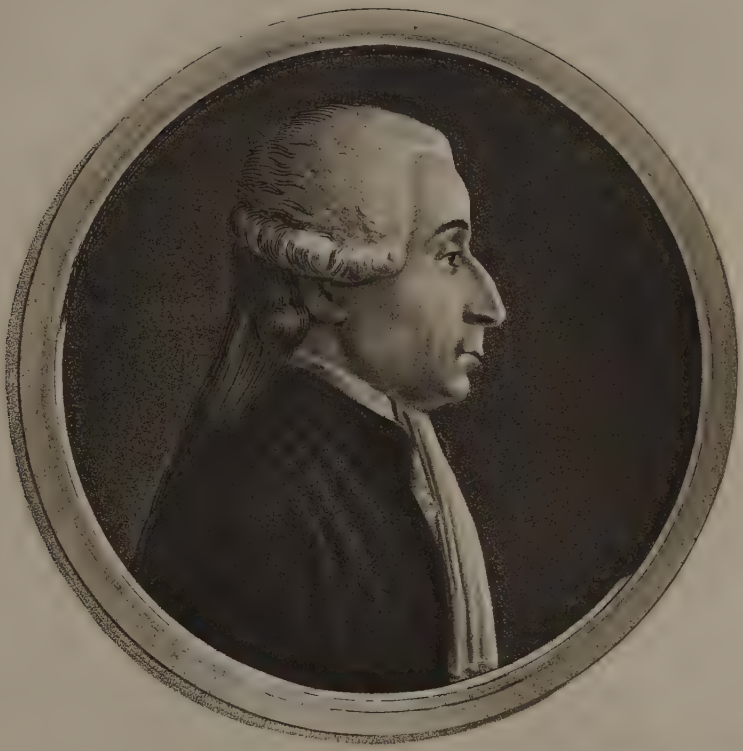
Not long afterwards his fury was again called forth by the affair of Nancy. This was the historic episode when two battalions of Swiss Guards and a body of French National Guards revolted against their officers, whom they accused of tyranny, and, retiring to the town of Nancy, were besieged by an army of four or five thousand men under a Royalist general named Bouillé. The latter did his work thoroughly, and, having entered the town, slaughtered half the insurgent soldiers and large numbers of the civil population who had sided with them. The affair had begun as a battle; it ended as a massacre. No incident during the early years of the Revolution was so disastrous to the monarchy and the old *régime*. The King and the Court regarded it as a victory, and the ruthless general was congratulated for his services, while the survivors of the massacre were threatened with death for mutiny. The reactionary deputies of the Assembly supported this promise of punishment, and for a time it did indeed seem as if the counter-revolution had triumphed. But in reality the 'affair at Nancy' was a sentence of death to the Royalists. It exasperated the people beyond the bounds of moderation or patience, and it was a reasonable excuse for the Jacobin party in the Assembly, although a small minority, to arouse the hatred of the nation against their opponents.

Marat himself let loose his ungoverned rage, and in the next numbers of *L'Ami du Peuple* denounced Bouillé and his supporters as barbarians, boldly proclaimed that the

Assembly had forfeited the confidence of the nation, and openly incited the Swiss Guards to rise and murder their officers. In another number of his journal he announced his intention of impeaching Lafayette, as the leading spirit of reaction, before the bar of public opinion, as formerly he had dealt with Necker. This announcement renewed Lafayette's hostility, and his agents of police, unable to put their hands on Marat himself, arrested the printer, wrecked the man's shop, and seized the whole edition of that day's paper.

But Marat still defeated the efforts to throttle him, and in the next numbers he warned the people that the King and the royal family were endeavouring to escape from the Assembly. This was a month before the flight from the Tuileries really took place, but when the escape was frustrated at Varennes and the King was brought back with ignominy to Paris, Marat threw off the last rag of reserve which had veiled his hatred for royalty and indulged his genius for invective upon the person of the King, whom he called ' a crowned brigand, a perjurer, traitor and conspirator, without honour and without soul ! '

The situation in France was now extraordinary and pregnant with ominous events. On the one hand was a majority in the Assembly of Royalists and Moderates. The municipality of Paris was still in the timid hands of Bailly and reactionary officials. The National Guard was still commanded by Lafayette, who was playing a double game between his principles of republicanism and his fears of revolution. On the other hand were the people, growing more restive and turbulent day by day, impatient of their representatives, suspicious of all this delay of liberty, intolerant of the last remaining relics of royal power. The Parisian populace gave expression to their feelings by a



Duplessis Bertaux

J. S. BAILLY

demonstration in the Champ de Mars on July 17, 1791, for the purpose of demanding the abdication of the King. All day long they surged in the great square, gratifying their emotions a little by the hanging of two supposed spies to a convenient lamp-post, and shouting threats against the royal family and the aristocrats. Towards half-past seven in the evening Bailly the mayor came into the square with the municipal authorities, bearing a small red flag as a symbol of martial law, and followed by battalions of the National Guards ordered by Lafayette to the 'scene of action.' The people were asked to disperse. Doubtless many of them never heard the request or caught a glimpse of the authorities. However that may be, the order was given to fire upon the crowd. The soldiers obeyed, and large numbers of unarmed citizens fell dead or wounded.

This 'Massacre of the Champ de Mars,' as it is called, seemed a more substantial victory of reaction than the affair at Nancy. For a time it overawed the advanced revolutionists, and Lafayette's agents effectually gagged the press. Marat was one of the few journalists who remained at their post, but even he could only issue his paper at rare intervals. When he did so, however, it was to urge the nation to 'rise throughout the country and immolate the monsters in authority to its avenging fury.' As he relates afterwards, it was at this time that he had his first interview with Robespierre. The future dictator of the Terror began his conversation by deprecating Marat's violence and 'sanguinary demands,' but the People's Friend reiterated his conviction that by violence alone could liberty be secured in France, vowing that if he had been able to lead the people he would have slaughtered the deputies who had approved the murders at Nancy, and after the massacre at the Champ de Mars he would have stabbed Lafayette in the midst of

the 'brigand battalions,' burnt the King in the palace, 'and strangled the traitor deputies in their seats.'

Marat then describes the effect of his words upon his visitor. 'Robespierre listened to me in terror. He became white, and was silent for a while. This meeting confirmed my constant opinion of him: that he has the knowledge of a wise senator and the integrity of a really good man, as well as the zeal of an honest patriot; but that his defects as a statesman are dimness of vision and a lack of determination.'

For weeks *L'Ami du Peuple* was practically discontinued, as Marat could no longer defy the vigilant persecution of the municipal authorities. He was in despair at his impotence, and determined to abandon to their fate a people who seemed to him at that time so little worthy of liberty. He made arrangements to escape to England, but before doing so waited to see the result of the new elections which were to replace the Constituent Assembly by a Legislative Assembly of entirely new deputies. The results of the election were a renewed disappointment to him. The Girondin or moderate party had gained the day, and they began their work by swearing to keep intact the constitution as it had been left by their predecessors—a constitution which to Marat seemed rotten to the core and a mere patchwork piece of mediæval despotism and liberal falsehoods. To Marat it seemed that one set of rogues had been replaced by another. He fired a parting broadside into the new Assembly, which he was convinced would be as reactionary as their predecessors, and then, hugging despair to his heart, laid down his pen and crossed over to England.

From the middle of December 1791 until the middle of April 1792 the hoarse shouts of the newsvendors selling 'The People's Friend' were not heard in Paris, and the

'moderate' men were happy to believe that the revolutionary snake had been scotched. But Marat had come back secretly to Paris in March, and was lodging quietly at No. 270 rue St. Honoré, watching and waiting the tide of events. In these days of inaction he found time also for a little love-making! The word seems strange and uncanny in relation to a Marat. Carlyle's epithet of an 'obscene spectrum,' gross and cruel as it is, obtrudes upon one's imagination, and it is difficult indeed to think of Marat, the man of terror, speaking words of tenderness to any gentle and virtuous woman. Simonne Evrard was the name of this woman who could find it in her heart to love a man whom history would call a monster. She was one of three sisters who rented the rooms in which the People's Friend had a lodging, and she seems to have been an intelligent and well-bred woman, as she was certainly a devoted and courageous wife. Marat married her 'one fine morning in presence of the sun.' It was not a marriage sanctified by ceremony or by civil law, but the devotion of two hearts is not without its own sanctity. While nothing may ever efface or palliate the bloodguiltiness of Marat, or the violence of hatred and denunciation not to be justified even by those who believe in the essential righteousness of the Revolution, we may see that even Marat was not without tenderness nor without instincts of amiable affection. His heart was hot with passion of a lurid kind, but doubtless those fires within him had not extinguished the purer flames of love. Simonne Evrard must have seen the nobler qualities of the man, his honesty, his courage, his loyalty, his pity for the sufferings of a people, his indignation at tyranny and cowardice. Seeing all this, she was moved with reverence, and perhaps also with a woman's pity, for a man who had suffered much and was still uncowed. His ugliness was to her a virtue,

his disease a claim upon her care, his danger an appeal to her courage, his public violence a proof of heroism and a contrast to his private gentleness. In some such way she may have argued, if women ever argue in making surrender of themselves.

During Marat's absence many important changes had taken place. The King had called a 'liberal' ministry composed of moderate reformers. Roland had become Minister of the Interior, Clavière Minister of Finance, Dumouriez Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the municipality Bailly had given place to Pétion as Mayor, and Lafayette no longer commanded the National Guards. The Girondins —Brissot, Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné and others—ruled the Legislative Assembly, and but for two or three ominous facts it might be said, theoretically at least, that the objects of the Revolution had been accomplished and that the liberty of France was secure.

Those unpleasant facts were the gathering of a great *émigré* army on the frontiers for the invasion of France, the ill-concealed negotiations of the royal family with the leaders of this army, which included the King's own brothers, and, more dangerous still, the hunger and poverty of the French people, who did not find that a 'liberal constitution' gave them bread, or adjusted the unevenly distributed wealth of the upper classes. The Legislative Assembly was inspired with martial ardour and compelled the King, sorely against his will, to declare war against the Austrians. In this enthusiasm over a war for which the nation was utterly unprepared, Marat saw nothing but a subtle plot to crush the Revolution and restore the power of the monarchy. He believed with despair that the ragged battalions of France, ill-fed and ill-armed, would be beaten back by the invaders; that their officers, whom he suspected of Royalist tendencies,

would seize the opportunity for treachery; that foreign troops would march to the heart of France through the blood of patriots; and that the monarchy, restored to its former despotic sway, would take a ruthless revenge for the Revolution. Then would 'judicial murder' make contemptible the acts of popular justice under the lantern, and wholesale assassination would destroy the bravest and the best in France. In the numbers of *L'Ami du Peuple*, which once more was hoarsely hawked upon the streets, Marat denounced the war for these reasons, thereby arousing the enmity of the Girondins. 'But at least,' he said, 'if war you will have, take the King as your hostage, making it clear to him that as soon as a foreign army marches upon French soil his perfidious head shall roll into the dust. Beware also of Lafayette, for treachery is in his heart.'

That was the tenour of Marat's utterances upon the reappearance of his paper. They angered the Girondins to the highest pitch of resentment, for Brissot and his fellow deputies in the Assembly, as well as Roland and his colleagues in the Ministry, were anxious to enlist the people's enthusiasm for the war. The People's Friend had again to go into retirement while he was accused repeatedly in the Assembly as a danger to the public welfare.

In the meantime, however, Danton and Desmoulins at the Cordeliers' Club and the advanced revolutionists at the Jacobin Club were exerting all their eloquence of voice and pen to stir the Parisian people into new revolt. The Dantonists were tired of delay, weary of moderation. The Republican ideal had taken possession of their souls, and they were eager for its fulfilment. The result of their efforts was shown on that famous August 10, the events of which have already been narrated in these pages. Then, with the sack of the Tuileries and the massacre of the Swiss Guards,

did the people of Paris mock at the mildness of their representatives in the Assembly, and show something of the forces that urged them on to anarchy.

Marat, who had been gagged into silence by the hostility of the Girondins, now emerged again into daylight and, exulting in 'the glorious day of August 10,' called upon the people to complete their work. 'No quarter,' he wrote in a placard that was pasted up in Paris before the blood of the Swiss Guards had dried on the stones of the Tuileries. 'No quarter!' He approved of the 'glorious triumph' that had been accomplished in the sack of the Tuileries, but he told them to beware of the reaction. 'You are destroyed irretrievably if you do not make haste to strike down the dishonest members of the municipality and of the department, all the counter-revolutionary judges, and the most putrid members of the National Assembly.'

As we have seen in previous pages, Danton became Minister of Justice after this date, and his first act was to establish a committee of supervision for the arrest and trial of 'suspects.' Large numbers of Royalists, including the officers of the Swiss Guards who had escaped the massacre at the Tuileries, were dragged to the various prisons of Paris, which were now crowded to excess. Then Danton made that famous call to arms against the enemies of the nation which resulted in the great enlistment of the ragged battalions who were to roll back the veteran armies of Europe. But this patriotism, so audacious and enthusiastic, was accompanied by a feeling of panic; an ominous and dreadful fear spread like a miasma among the ranks of the people. They were willing to go and fight the foreign foe, but they were terrified by the enemies at home. The horror of 'reaction' and counter-revolution was working them into madness, and in the hearts of the people there came surging up those

brutal and ferocious instincts of cruelty which have their basis in fear. 'We will fight the armies of Europe,' was the thought, expressed or unexpressed, in the taverns and garrets of the city, 'but we will first destroy the enemies in our own midst!' Marat, who was the voice of the popular instincts of the Revolution, was not dumb now, when those instincts were groping their way to action. In words that seem written in blood, he urged the people to march upon the Abbaye, that prison where so many Royalists were awaiting their doom, and with their own hands make sure that these enemies of the Revolution at least should be destroyed before a lenient or reactionary judge could liberate them to plot anew against the progress of liberty. 'They are traitors whom it is necessary to sacrifice without delay.'

Those words may never be effaced by the apologists of Marat. For all time they will stand as the signal for destruction which resulted in the September massacres, when a crowd of *sans-culottes*, with wild dishevelled hair, and eyes blazing with the madness of the blood-fever, rushed from prison to prison with pikes and axes, and murdered, after a terrible mockery of justice, the men and women of gentle blood who were as helpless as sheep in the shambles.

It is folly to say, as Marat's apologists have said, that he was not responsible for these bloody deeds, and that the *sans-culottes* would have slaked their vengeance upon the aristocrats had Marat never lived. The truth remains that in the written letter Marat directly incited the people to these atrocities, and, when they were accomplished, approved them. The only palliation of his guilt, and that a poor one, was his anxiety to save the prisoners who were incarcerated for debt and petty offences. To Marat the pickpocket and the burglar were innocent and harmless compared with men and women who were the friends of Royalty

and enemies of the Revolution. According to the strict logic of the principles of revolution he was right in this conviction, for in the gospel of Rousseauism the so-called thief was the product of a false distribution of wealth, and the aristocrat was the real robber. But the theories of 'The Social Contract,' however right they may seem in the abstract, are devilishly wrong when put into sudden practical effect by the violence of a mob. The distinctions of class and wealth and privilege may not be consistent with an ideal state of society, but humanity itself is outraged when men and women are slaughtered in cold blood.

It is quite true that the *sans-culottes* may have 'worked in the prisons,' as they called it, even though Marat had never lived, for the circumstances of the time and the sequence of events seemed to lead the way to this dark chamber of horrors. But Marat was the man who gave expression and sanction to the surging up of this bloodthirsty impulse, and upon him, therefore, must the guilt rest heavily.

This supreme right to the guilt of September gave him his title-deeds of power. Marat was now the dictator of France. He was the living symbol of Terror. He had behind him the whole army of *sans-culottes*, and by his pen or by his voice he could direct their fury upon new objects of vengeance. When at last he was elected as deputy in the Assembly he had against him at first almost the whole body of his colleagues. Even Danton had a horror of him, though he was a partner in his violence. The Girondins to a man knew him as their enemy and hated him. Until now many of them had never seen this human tornado. Marat had been an underground animal and had shunned the light of day. But now all eyes were turned upon him as he came day by day to the Assembly. He was repulsive in his ugliness and in his disregard of cleanliness and respect-

able dress. His large bony face was blotched with the painful skin disease from which he suffered, his eyes were bleared and red-rimmed from the effect of writing in dark cellars, and the greasy rag he wore round his head, and the loose dressing-gown which left his throat and chest bare, gave him a disreputable and savage appearance. As he sat among the benches at the end of the hall, which were afterwards to be nicknamed the Mountain, he seemed to many of the deputies, who trembled in his presence, like some human vulture, the harbinger of death.

Marat did not abate his violence or his arrogance in the Assembly. *L'Ami du Peuple* still appeared, but in this as well as in the Assembly itself he still denounced 'traitors' and 'reactionaries,' still continued to spread the miasma of suspicion, still urged vigilance and decisive action. One dramatic scene stands out in the history of those days, revealing how powerful Marat was with the people behind him, and how arrogantly he used that power.

It was at the house of Talma, the great actor. A brilliant gathering had assembled in the evening to do honour to General Dumouriez, who had just returned to Paris after defeating the armies of invasion on the frontiers. He was naturally a popular hero, and especially idolised by the Girondins, who had been responsible for the declaration of war. Talma's salon was crowded with all 'the best society' in Paris. The days had not yet come when to be well dressed was a crime, and the rooms were brilliant with fine toilettes. Dumouriez was smiling and chatting amiably, pleased with all the hero-worship. Perhaps a shadow lurked in the background of his soul. Perhaps even now he was wondering how soon it would be safe to turn traitor to the revolutionists and go over to the *émigrés* whom he had just defeated. In his heart he was a Royalist, and he feared

the inability of these Girondin idolisers to save the King and Queen from the hatred of the Jacobins. There was another thing that must have troubled him. Some battalions of Parisian volunteers had been insubordinate and had murdered four 'Prussian' deserters whom they suspected of being *émigrés* and spies. Dumouriez had sentenced them all to imprisonment, but already their friends in Paris were beginning to ask awkward questions. However, in Talma's salon dark thoughts should have no place. All was bright and gay; the ripple of soft music, the glamour of many candles, the swish of women's skirts, the light laughter of pleasant voices, made a harmony of colour and sound soothing to the spirits.

Suddenly, however, the harmony was destroyed by a discordant noise and a strange appearance. The door was thrown open and a loud coarse voice, that of Santerre, the brewer, announced '*M. Marat, L'Ami du Peuple!*' A hush fell on the company. What did this mean? What was the deadly object of this uninvited guest?'

Marat, followed by one or two friends, strode contemptuously and arrogantly, in his squalid attire, through the crowd of fashionable people. He went straight up to Dumouriez and in stern and threatening voice requested an explanation of the General's conduct with regard to the Parisian volunteers. He had already applied to the Ministry of War, he said, but the evidence was unsatisfactory and suspicious. He demanded that the full facts should be revealed.

General Dumouriez was taken aback by this sudden attack, and faltered under the fierce eyes of his accuser. But, recovering himself, he coldly denied Marat's right to question him. Marat responded with angry words, but Dumouriez turned upon his heel. Talma, the actor and the host of the

entertainment, intervened, and other men came round and rebuked Marat for his uncalled-for intrusion. The People's Friend was at last prevailed upon to leave, which he did, breathing threats against Dumouriez; but when he had gone a heavy gloom fell upon the company and the entertainment was broken up. Marat endangered his popularity by his attack on the hero of the hour; but when, not many weeks later, this same general betrayed his troops and went over to the enemy, the dramatic scene in Talma's salon was remembered with new significance.

Marat's influence in the National Assembly was now predominant. Although the 'men of the Mountain,' of whom Danton was the leader, did not acknowledge Marat as one of them, and although the Girondins, who were in a great majority, were eager to send him to the guillotine, if they dared do so, his hold upon the mob in Paris was so strong that his rasping voice in the Convention made all moderate men tremble for their lives. There is no doubt that the Girondins would have saved the King's life if they could, but Marat and the Mountain united their determination for a Republic, overawed the Assembly, and terrified the majority into acquiescence with the people's will. When the death votes were taken it was Marat who called upon the *sans-culottes* to surround the *salle de manège* in the Tuileries where the deputies were sitting, to guard against treachery and weakness. Called upon to give his own vote, he rose and spoke the following words: 'Firmly convinced that Louis is the chief author of the crimes which resulted in the blood of August 10, and of all the massacres which have stained France since the Revolution, I vote for the death of the tyrant in twenty-four hours.'

After the King's execution Marat changed the name of his paper to 'Le Journal de la République,' and began a

duel to the death against the moderate men in the Convention. Danton and Desmoulins were his allies, and the Jacobins or 'Mountain' were at deadly feud with the Girondins of the 'Plain.' For a time it seemed as if Marat would be defeated. Brissot, Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné, and all the leading spirits of the moderate party united to crush this revolutionary 'demon.' Whenever he rose to speak they shouted him down with cries of 'To the Abbaye!' 'To the guillotine!' Violent passages in his paper, in which he recklessly urged the people to further bloodshed and put a price on the heads of 'reactionary' ministers, judges, and deputies, were read out, with a demand for his arrest and punishment. Marat, in truth, went a great deal too far even for the Jacobins. When the people of Paris were famishing for food, and all their work of revolution had not given them bread, Marat incited them to sack the bakers' shops, accusing the *bourgeoisie* of holding back bread to put up the price. This deliberate encouragement of anarchy was read out in the Assembly amidst the groans of the deputies, and Buzot, who had brought forward the charge, moved that 'M. Marat be decreed accused!' The case was referred to the ordinary tribunals of the law, but Marat's popularity was now so great that the executive did not proceed further in the matter. Then, some weeks later, came the news that Dumouriez had gone over to the enemy and had sworn to march on Paris and annihilate the Mountain. This report inflamed Marat to madness. He raised a howl of execration against the Girondins, whom he accused of being in league with the traitor. He issued a manifesto calling the people 'to arms.' 'We are betrayed!' he wrote. 'The hour has arrived when patriots must either be victorious or be buried beneath the ruins of the Republic.' Having denounced Dumouriez and warned the Parisians against his intention to march upon

the capital, he told them that their greatest dangers lurked in their very midst. 'It is in the Senate that murderous hands would tear out your vitals!' Yes, the Counter-Revolution is in the Government, in the National Convention! . . . Come, then, Republicans. To arms! Let us destroy all conspirators without pity, if we would not be destroyed ourselves!'

Again Marat's words were read out in the Convention, and this time the Girondins, who saw their very lives depended upon silencing this man of blood, resolved to bring him to the bar of justice. In their agitation they omitted to have the decree of arrest signed by the Minister of Justice, and when it was handed to Marat, as he left the Assembly, he refused to submit to it. For some days he continued to bring out his journal, but on April 23 he announced his intention of presenting himself before the Revolutionary Tribunal. He was confident that no jury of citizens would bring in a verdict of guilty.

This trial did not result in the condemnation of Marat, but in the overthrow of the Girondins. It was a splendid opportunity for Marat to appeal to the verdict of the people, to denounce the enemies who were endeavouring to destroy the People's Friend, a man who had sacrificed so much and suffered so much in the cause of liberty. His bitter eloquence, his arrogant courage, his denunciations of the counter-revolution, and his appeals to the 'patriots' overwhelmed the jury, and were repeated from mouth to mouth until they reached the lowest haunts of Paris. The foreman of the jury, in acquitting Marat, paid a tribute to his 'virtues,' and upon leaving the court the People's Friend was lifted shoulder-high and carried through the streets, where flowers were strewn in his path and great crowds greeted him with a frenzy of enthusiasm.

Marat had triumphed, and with him the Mountain. From the hour of his acquittal the Girondins knew themselves to be doomed. Marat and the Jacobins were now irresistible, and it was not long before the leading Girondins, accused of conspiring with Dumouriez and of counter-revolutionary principles, went in a batch to the guillotine.

But Marat himself was also doomed. That terrible triumph over the men who had formerly led the way to liberty, men of intellect and moderation who had endeavoured, though timidly and feebly, to hold the balance between liberty and anarchy, had shocked the saner spirits of the nation. It set in motion the great wave of reaction which would soon surge among the people themselves, and already was sweeping back men like Danton and Desmoulins. That bloody vengeance over his enemies was also the excuse for fanaticism and the opportunity that sharpens the assassin's knife. At the town of Caen was a young woman named Charlotte Corday, who had long reverenced the Girondins, some of whom had been personally known to her, with the enthusiasm and sentiment of girlhood for men who pose as reformers and idealists. The news of their execution overwhelmed her with horror, and probably unbalanced her reason. With the courage of the martyr, but also, it must be admitted, with the self-consciousness and egotism of the mere fanatic, she left secretly her father's house at Caen and travelled by coach to Paris.

Marat, the People's Friend and the virtual dictator of France, was at this time suffering acutely from his chronic disease, and had to absent himself from the Assembly. But he worked indefatigably at home, nursed by Simonne Evrard, his mistress or wife. On July 13 there came a knock at the door downstairs, and presently a letter was handed to Marat, in which he read the following words :

'Citizen,—I come from Caen. Your love for your country makes me think you would like to know the miserable events in that part of the Republic. I shall present myself at your house at seven o'clock; have the goodness to receive me and grant me a moment's interview. I shall put you in a position to render a great service to the country.'

Marat was told that a strange-looking girl had delivered this note, but that on account of his ill-health she had been refused admission. That evening, shortly after seven, as the letter stated, the young woman again knocked at the door and pleaded to see Marat. Again she was refused, but she made so much noise in repeating her request that Marat called for Simonne and asked what the matter was. Upon hearing that the young woman was below who had written the letter about Caen, he said he would see her.

He was lying in a warm bath, covered over by a large rug, with a board which he used as a writing-desk. The young woman entered alone, and Marat, looking curiously at his persistent caller, asked what was happening at Caen.

Charlotte Corday accused eighteen deputies of reactionary plots.

'Give me their names,' said Marat.

The young woman enumerated them—they were all Girondins who had fled from Paris.

Marat scribbled them down as she spoke.

'They will not be long before they are guillotined,' he said grimly, as he finished the list. These at least were the words first attributed to him by Charlotte Corday herself, though afterwards she altered the sense of them a little. Whatever the exact words, they were the signal for his assassination. Pulling from beneath her stays a butcher's knife, which she had purchased that morning, she plunged it straight to the heart of the People's Friend. He uttered

but one cry of agony to Simonne. '*À moi! Chère ami! À moi!*' and then fell back dead.

His death cry brought his little household to his side. Simonne came rushing in and gave a loud scream as she saw the pool of blood on the floor, the strange woman with the dripping knife, the ghastly face of Marat in the bath. Catherine Evrard her sister, Jeannette the cook, and Laurent Bas, a printer, followed on her heels and added their cries to hers. With a curse, Laurent Bas lifted up a stool and felled the murderess. She struggled up, but by this time the room was filled with excited people from the street who, alarmed by all the noise, burst in to see what had happened to the People's Friend. Charlotte Corday was almost torn to pieces before she was taken in charge by the police and carried off to the Conciergerie. She swooned away in the coach, but soon recovered herself, and answered the police interrogatory with remarkable courage and *sang-froid*. She avowed her deed and exulted in having accomplished it.

'I have killed one man to save a hundred thousand,' she said, and her only regret was that she had not been able to kill 'the monster' on the summit of the Mountain, where she would have suffered instant death at the hands of the mob. Her trial was conducted with much brutality by Fouquier-Tinville, but Charlotte Corday exhibited too much vanity to merit the sentimental eulogies which have elevated this girl assassin to the rank of martyrdom. Seeing an artist sketching her in court, she was careful to place herself in a pose which would do justice to herself and give him his opportunity. While awaiting execution she petitioned the Council to have her portrait painted, and this request having been granted she seemed to derive much satisfaction during her last days in the thought that the picture would help to

perpetuate her memory. A violent thunderstorm broke over Paris as she rode on the fatal tumbril to the place of execution, but she preserved a dramatic pose to the last and endeavoured to address the people from the scaffold. Sanson the executioner, however, ordered his assistants to do their awful work, and it is said that when her head fell under the knife one of these men of blood held it up to the people and boxed its face, upon which the cheeks were seen to blush. While the body of Marat's murderess was being thrown into a pit, the corpse of the People's Friend was receiving the last homage of the Parisians. David the painter made a picture of him as he lay dead, and his funeral took the form of a great pageant. The bath in which he had died, his chair, and other relics were carried in procession with the coffin, and enormous crowds followed the body to the grave. The men of the Mountain exerted all their violence of language in preaching his funeral orations, comparing him with Jesus Christ as the saviour of a people. Busts and portraits of him were hawked in the streets, and the Pantheon, where he was interred with the highest honours, became a place of pilgrimage. Thus it was on December 21, 1794. Less than six months later David's picture of Marat was removed from the Assembly, and not long afterwards the mouldering remains of the man who had been mourned as a martyr to liberty were hastily removed from the Pantheon and cast ignominiously into a common place of burial. Such was the irony of fate and the fickleness of the French! The Terror by which Marat had gained his power over the imagination of the people had exhausted its fever, and the inevitable reaction had set in. Those who had cared nothing for blood so that liberty might be assured were now careless of liberty so that they might awake from the nightmare of death.

CHAPTER VII

DESMOULINS AND DANTON

In the phantasmagoria of this Revolution which excites the imagination with its shifting scenes of strange and terrible drama, with its crowded figures whirling through the mists of memory in a dance of death, two men stand out in the forefront of the stage, attracting the attention of modern students of history with resistless fascination. Even now, when nearly a century and a half have buried all these memories within the shadows of time, one cannot stroll through the streets of Paris without meeting in the spirit one or other of these men, or both of them, arm in arm, as they walked so often in the flesh. These streets are haunted by their footsteps. These two men come together down the rue St. Honoré, they loom out of the dim arcades of the Palais Royal when night has fallen, we feel them close to us as we stand in the rue de l'École de Médecine, conjuring up shadow pictures of the crowds that thronged the old club of the Cordeliers, of which these two figures were for a time the heroes, and afterwards the victims. Often they are together in our imagination, but in two scenes which flash upon the brain like lantern slides thrown upon the white screen they play widely different parts.

One of these scenes has for its background the Palais Royal, and the stage itself is the great square, filled with a surging mob of men and women. Some of these are well-dressed, with powdered hair and clothes that have cost good

MOTION FAITE AU PALAIS ROYAL, PAR CAMILLE DESMOULINS

le 12 Jeuillet, 1789

money. They are the representatives of the middle class, lawyers and doctors, young students from the School of Medicine, journalists, poets, here and there philosophers from the Academy, and a sprinkling of ladies in silk dresses and feathered hats, blooming like flowers in the July sun. But the majority of the people in the square are of a different kind. They have come surging in from the faubourg St. Antoine and the rue Montmartre, from the markets, the slaughter-houses, and the slums where every other house is a tavern and where people who are starving are still able to get drink. Butchers in leather aprons reeking with the blood of beasts stand with naked arms, that are thrown upwards at times with clenched fists, as a sudden gust of frenzy passes through the crowd at wild words rising above the din of many voices. Men with bare chests and clothes in rags that hardly cover their nakedness clutch at their hair or grip the arms of their comrades with claw-like hands, filthy and long-taloned. Women with gaunt cheeks and tangled locks, and short skirts hanging about their legs, shriek out laughter and blasphemies, or stare with wild eyes at men who stand among them shouting out speeches of which only one sentence in six is heard or understood. And all the time the people eddy to and fro, splitting into small groups or surging in a great human wave to some part of the square, without any other purpose, it seems, than to roll back again in an ebb-tide. But suddenly they throng to one point, shoving and punching those in front of them, and swirling round a table in front of one of the taverns which have given an ill-repute to the Palais Royal. What is it? What is happening? A young man is standing on the table, swaying backwards and forwards as he bends over the heads of the people, or recoils with outstretched arms in a fierce gesture of denunciation. He is a pale young man with

lank black locks, and black eyes that burn with passionate fire. His voice rings across the square, at first in stuttering, stammering words, incoherent and wild, so that the mob cheer him without knowing his meaning, except that he is denouncing the aristocrats, which is good enough. But in a minute or two he forgets his stutter, and excitement gives him eloquence. The crowd stops its own shouting. The square is suddenly silent. Everyone is listening to this young man with the pale, bilious face. What is this he is saying ?

' Citizens '—the words are now clear and as sharp as steel—' the whole nation has demanded that Necker should be kept. I come from Versailles. . . . Necker has been sent away. His dismissal is the tocsin that rings out another St. Bartholomew, the massacre of the patriots ! This evening the Swiss and German Guards are coming from the Champ de Mars to cut our throats. . . . There is no time to lose. We have only one thing to do. We must get to arms. We must wear cockades to know our friends from enemies.' He fumbles at his breast, and, pulling out a green ribbon, thrusts it in his hat, where it flutters in the wind.

' What colour shall we rally under ? ' he shouts again, his eyes blazing with excitement. ' Will you have green, the colour of hope, or blue, the colour of American liberty and of democracy ? '

The crowd has grasped his meaning. They are to wear a badge of revolt and armed resistance to tyrants and murderers.

' Green ! Green ! ' they shout back at him. ' The green cockade ! '

A madness has taken possession of them. With oaths and laughter, in merry ferocity, they have rushed to the trees

in the gardens of the Palais Royal, tearing down the branches, stripping them of leaves, and thrusting the green stuff in their hats. It seems as if a sudden hurricane had passed, so naked are the gardens which five minutes before had been clothed in verdure.

Camille Desmoulins, the young man who has worked this madness, is still talking himself hoarse, still beating the air with his clenched white hand. 'Friends, the police are here. They are watching me. They are spying on me. *Eh bien!* Yes, it is I, Camille Desmoulins, who call my brothers to liberty. But I will not let them take me alive! Let all good citizens follow me. To arms!'

The last words at least are heard, and the voice of a great mob echoes them in a shout which is borne by the wind to the four quarters of Paris.

'*Aux armes!*'

The words are shouted again and again.

'*Aux armes!*'

The butchers of St. Antoine wave their hairy arms, the women of the markets shriek out the words in shrill frenzy, like the screams of witches on Walpurgis night. The black-clothed lawyers throw their high felt hats in the air and take up the echoing chorus. Even some of the dainty women in the crowd flutter lace handkerchiefs and cry 'To arms!' with flushed cheeks and glistening eyes. It is the *début* of Camille Desmoulins in history. It is the call to arms which brought the Bastille to the ground and began the bloody reign of revolution.

The night that followed that day of July 12 is ominous of tragedy. Camille Desmoulins is the captain of a great army of citizens who watch and wait through the dark silent hours. In some of the streets there are already struggles between citizens and soldiers. The Prince de Lambesc is

patrolling the city with the troops of the Royal-Allemand, and driving the people before the naked sabres of his squadrons. As yet it is not a revolution. It is the insurrection of an unarmed people. But on the next day the people are no longer without weapons. They have armed themselves with old flint-locks and pistols, with pikes and axes, and butchers' knives, and dung-forks. The armourers' shops have been ransacked. The Hôtel des Invalides has been sacked. Paris is under arms, and not only the voice of Camille Desmoulins, but the voices of a hundred thousand men and women, animated by what may seem a sudden impulse, but what was really the expression of centuries of hatred against the grim symbol of despotism, are shouting the first watchwords of revolution—*À la Bastille!*

De Launay, the governor, has heard the shout, and already the drawbridge is up and small cannon are loaded and pointed downwards towards the advancing mob. But in his heart the governor knows his doom. He knows that with his small garrison of old soldiers even such a fortress as this cannot be defended against the fury of thousands. Yet he is a brave man. He tries to animate the hearts of his men, and vows that he will blow the place up rather than surrender it. Three times he refuses the demand to capitulate. Once there is an act of treachery unworthy of a soldier. The drawbridge is lowered to receive a deputy who comes in under a white flag to parley with the governor, followed by a crowd of unarmed citizens. No sooner have they entered than the drawbridge is raised again, and to the crowd outside the sudden rattle of musketry and the groans of dying men tell the tale of this treachery and fill them with a fiercer and bloodier lust of revenge and destruction. There is no stopping them now. If they had to tear the walls down with their teeth the Bastille would be

ARRESTATION DE Mr DE LAUNAY, GOUVERNEUR DE LA BASTILLE

le 14 Juillet, 1789.

destroyed. It is a sea of men which is hurled upon the gate. A tornado of axes and pikes thunders upon it. A citizen falls riddled with small shot. 'Go on, my friends,' he gasps out with his last breath; 'I am dying, but you will take it.' De Launay, the governor, is wandering about like a madman, trying to find a barrel of gunpowder, trying to get down to the cellars, so that he may blow up his fortress and bury himself in the ruins. But he is prevented by his own officers, who still believe they have a chance of life even though the mob should gain the day. Vain hope! When at last the crowd bursts in, they have forgotten mercy, they know no law but that of vengeance. De Launay and his officers are dragged out into the streets of Paris, passed from hand to hand, between people greedy to get at them and tear them into strips of flesh. In the memoirs of that time we may read of passing glimpses, obtained from windows or above the shoulders of the mob, of those wretched victims as they were dragged hither and thither, up one street and down another, at the will of the people who played with them in a spirit of ferocious hilarity until some of them, unable to postpone any further the culminating joy of revenge, put an end to their prisoners' torture by butchers' knives or wood-choppers. That afternoon the first harvest of the Revolution was gathered in, and the harvest festival was being danced to by the frenzied reapers of death round pikes bearing aloft the bloody heads of De Launay and the defenders of the Bastille. Meanwhile that fortress was being ransacked by the victorious besiegers, eager to gloat over the prize of victory, eager to discover to the world the grim secrets which its walls had hidden for many centuries of despotism. Dungeons there were in plenty, and all the machinery of mediæval torture, but instead of those crowds of miserable beings who, in the imagination of the Parisian mob, had

been consigned to a living death by infamous *lettres de cachet*, only seven men were disinterred from their prison grave. They came, blinking and trembling, into the light of day, not knowing the cause of their deliverance, even a little sorry, it seems, to be restored to a life which they had resigned for ever. One of them had been in prison for thirty years, and had begun to think that 'the only human beings on earth were his gaolers.' Another, an Englishman, or more probably an Irishman, named Whyte, was quite mad, and could give no answer as to why or when he had been thrust into the Bastille.

Not the mob alone, but every liberal man and woman of France rejoiced at the fall of this prison-fortress which had so long been the menace of liberty and the stronghold of despotism. The Mayor of Paris, with the consent of the electors, issued an order for its total destruction, and not one stone was left on another. But to one man in Paris more than to any other—to Camille Desmoulins, who had called the people to the assault—its downfall was a source of personal joy and exultation. By his words he had aroused the spirit of the people to the pitch of passionate energy, and, by causing them to realise their own power, had at one blow shattered the terrors of despotic government. So thought Camille Desmoulins, and his head was now on fire at the sense of his own glorious share in this great day of history. All his natural egotism was inflamed; and that day's work confirmed the opinions he had already secretly held regarding his own genius and his mission.

As the name of Desmoulins conjures up the vision of that scene on July 12 when men and women went plucking leaves in the Palais Royal, so the name of Danton, his friend and fellow-sufferer, must always bring to one's mind another scene in the drama of the Revolution. Camille Desmoulins,

when he cried 'To arms!' was typical of the young Revolution, full of ardour for liberty, inspired with wild flamboyant hopes of universal happiness as the fruit of liberty, and animated by a frank and rash courage which made even death itself glorious and desirable. But Danton, as we see him most vividly in the tumbril on the way to the guillotine, as we see him standing on the high scaffold silhouetted for a few minutes against the sky, is typical, as it were, of the Revolution's old age, of its miserable and tragic old age, when youthful enthusiasm for a high ideal has ended in failure after horrible excesses, when the despotism of Terror has taken the place of a tyranny that was mild and harmless in comparison. For this writer at least the memory of Danton, that Titan of the early Revolution, is always dominated by the vision of him in his last hours on earth, when with a bitter and scornful smile he faced the jeering and insulting mob whom he had endeavoured to lead to liberty, answering their shouts with words so loud and bold, in his great thundering voice, that they were heard even amidst the tumult of the mob; when he mounted the scaffold, and with superb arrogance gave his command to the executioner who was about to take his life: 'Thou shalt show my head to the people. It is well worth the trouble. It is not every day they see such a head!' On his way to the scaffold he had lashed the people with words of irony and had laughed, with his great head thrown back and his big teeth bared at them. At the foot of the scaffold he had jested with death, and made merry, with grim and terrible merriment, over the instruments of death. The executioner had prevented him from embracing his friend, Hérault de Séchelles, before they parted on the threshold of eternity. 'Imbeciles!' he cried with a loud guffaw. 'You will prevent our heads from embracing presently in the basket there!'

Upon the scaffold he faltered only once, when he thought of the wife he loved so much. 'Danton, no weakness,' he said, and nerved himself to die with a courage worthy of his life. Then he had roared out that command to his executioner, his last words to the world, and the man who had been the boldest leader of the Revolution died as a result of the forces he had himself unleashed and failed to control.

Camille Desmoulins, the table orator of the Palais Royal, and Georges-Jacques Danton, the greatest leader of the Revolution, were men whose lives were linked together by friendship and by fate. They were strangely different. It was a companionship of the lion and, not of the lamb, but of the eagle. Danton had the courage of the lion and the magnanimity of the lion. Desmoulins had courage too of a kind, but it was not the courage of the king of beasts, who roars loudest when brought to bay. He soared high in flights of fancy. He had the beauty and the strength of the bird of prey, and when he swooped he plucked the heart out of his victims. But the wounded eagle is a pitiful thing, and when Desmoulins went to his death it was with a cry of anguish.

Always between these two friends there was the bond of mental vehemence and animal strength. Desmoulins was by nature weak, irresolute, hysterical, and feverish. He dared more than Danton because he had not the same strength of judgment and sanity of courage. But he feared more than Danton because his intellect was more courageous than his heart. Danton, indeed, feared nothing. The tall, broad-shouldered man, with the muscles of a blacksmith, with the broad rugged face of a peasant, with the voice of a sea-captain, was constitutionally incapable of fear. He laughed in the face of death. He thundered defiance at

enemies who had command of death. There was nothing mean or morbid in him, and, so far as we may analyse the great heart of him, he had none of that personal vanity which marred the greatness of so many Frenchmen during the time of revolution. Some of us may have learnt to admire Marat, but none can be touched by any love for him. But Danton inspires one with something warmer than mere admiring. His heart was big. Ferocious he might be, stern and relentless at times when the Republic was in danger, but there was pity in his heart also, and a great love for his fellow-men and for his country.

He was practising quietly as an advocate during those days when his young friend set Paris plucking green cockades which were soon to be changed for the tricolour. It was then that he was fired with the fever of revolution, and when, with Camille Desmoulins and Marat, he established the Cordeliers' Club, his genius and eloquence soon attracted the attention of the thoroughgoing revolutionists. Without a place in the National Assembly he had more power than anyone save Mirabeau. The Cordeliers' Club became the stronghold of the Revolution from the people's standpoint, and for a time rivalled the more famous club of the Jacobins. It was from the chapel of the old Franciscan monastery where the Cordeliers' Club held its meetings that Danton's voice shook the very foundations of the French monarchy and the *ancien régime*. It was in this club that Danton waged war against the Girondists, the mild men of the Revolution, whose moderation and irresolution seemed treachery to the Republic when it was menaced from within by reactionary plots and military traitors, and from without by Prussian armies and *émigré* regiments who were threatening to march on Paris and raze it to the dust. The Titanic power of the man, his 'beauty of ugliness,' in which as in

other characteristics he strongly resembled Mirabeau, his passionate hatred of royalty and aristocrats, his fervent love for the soil and the people and the power of his country, his superb courage, which faced all odds unflinchingly, marked him out as the born leader of revolution, and he was the very voice of the French people. After the fall of the Tuileries, a victory of popular passion of which any glory it may have, and some of its horrors, are due to the leading spirit, to the direct instigation, of Danton, he was chosen as Minister of Justice. This was in August of the year 1792. They were days when France was in greater danger than ever before, when liberty was threatened with the iron heel of despotism and the bloodshed of a people who strove to be free. The Prussians were over the border, and no more than a rabble of French soldiers, ill-armed and ill-disciplined, under officers already suspected of royalism, were opposed to the combination of foreign Powers now closing in upon them. There was panic at the very heart of the nation. Men went about with forebodings of irretrievable ruin and with the fear of death in them. On September 2 Danton appeared on the tribune of the Legislative Assembly, and his speech that night awakened the soul of France, created a new nation, and broke down the boundaries of European States. It was a call to arms. Not as Camille had called the people of Paris to arm themselves against their own oppressors, but a call upon the patriotism of a nation to defend its soil, and to carry the banner of liberty across the borders of France. No man but Danton could have thundered forth that trumpet-blast which brought every French peasant to his feet, and made an army of resistless might out of rabble crowds. No man but Danton in that Assembly could have dared such odds with such sublime faith in the virtue of courage, nor promised victory when defeat was

at the doors. No man but this tribune of the people could have challenged the armies of Europe to mortal combat when France was defenceless and unarmed. It was Danton's own soul which spoke those famous words regarding the enemies of France :

' Pour les vaincre, pour les atterrer, que faut-il ? De l'audace, encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace ! '

The call was not in vain. The fire of Danton's soul inflamed the people of France, and caught them up in a blaze of enthusiasm and martial ardour. Fathers sent their sons to fight, mothers gave their first-born, and the last of their children if they were needed, to die or to be crippled if that must be ; and every ragged wretch of the cities, every stalwart lad of the fields, sprang forward eagerly to join the armies of defence. Those armies gathered upon the frontiers, and the world began to learn that when Frenchmen fight with their souls they are not easily defeated. France was saved from the enemy without. They had more to fear now from the destroying fever within their own hearts.

That September which showed the glorious courage of the French people showed also their pitiful cowardice and their instincts for ferocious panic. Words should hardly be defiled by describing the horrors of those September days when a horde of savages, men and women in their outward form but animals within, frenzied with the lust of blood, surged from prison to prison, massacring the helpless crowds of prisoners, guilty for the most part of nothing but gentle birth, and some of them innocent of that. Danton has been blamed for these September massacres, which have left bloodstains on the history of France never to be washed out. Danton's hands were clean of the crime. No evidence has shown that he directly incited such savagery. Yet he is not blameless, for it was his denunciation of counter-

revolutionary plots and the pictures he conjured up with words so terrible that they infected the populace of Paris with a dread panic of aristocratic reaction that turned them into maniacs and murderers. Danton must be blamed, like Camille Desmoulins and Marat, for working upon the imagination of a people already hysterical with fear and hatred, and afterwards for condoning and slurring over atrocities which dragged the revolutionary ideals of liberty and justice through the shambles of barbarous revenge. Yet, though we may blame Desmoulins and Danton for violence of speech which led to atrocious action, let us be just and restrained in our condemnation. They were not cold-blooded criminals, nor the wilful instigators of wanton murder. They were not scrupulous of blood. It seemed good to them that the blood of traitors and of enemies of liberty should flow in the gutters of France. Yet even the mildest among us, looking back upon the Revolution from a period when many of the ideals for which the men of revolution struggled and fought have long passed into the enacted laws of liberty, must acknowledge that revolutions are not made with rose-water, and that justice must not always be tempered with mercy. Judging them with as much knowledge of the facts as history affords us, we may acquit Danton and Desmoulins of murderous design, though not of bloodguiltiness.

The domestic life of these men must be known before the verdict is given, and before we may take the measure of their virtues and vices. Their private lives, indeed, are more interesting than their public actions and speeches, because here we see the ordinary everyday characters of the men. There is a fascination in the glimpses we get of Camille Desmoulins and of Danton in their home circles, away from the scenes of the great drama. It is so strange to find that these men

who led a bloody revolution enjoyed the quiet pleasures of a home life, that they could love as well as hate, that they had tender sentiments and the amiable ambitions of domesticity. It is strange, because it is so difficult for our limited imagination to realise that the men who rode the storm of civil warfare, who sat daily at the right hand of death, and whose hands, or the hands of some of them, were stained red with the blood of their fellow-countrymen, were often fond lovers, devoted husbands, and tender fathers. We are too apt to think of them only in the tribune, or at the barricades, or on the scaffold. We do not think of them by the side of a cradle, or hand in hand with the women of their love.

If Camille Desmoulins were to be judged alone by his published writings, such as the 'Discours de la Lanterne' or the 'Histoire des Brissotins,' he would seem but a wild demagogue and a fanatical firebrand. But if we see Desmoulins as a lover in the gardens of the Luxembourg, as a fond young husband and as a proud young father in his lodgings in the rue du Commerce, we see something of the tenderness and the poetry in his heart, his weakness and humanity, the lovable nature of him that was at the bottom of his vanity and his violence of imagination.

The oldest of five children belonging to a respectable and honoured *bourgeois* couple living at Guise in Picardy, Camille had received advantages of education above the little fortune of his family. M. Desmoulins, a generous and noble father, for whom his eldest son had a lifelong devotion, was by no means rich, and it was through the good offices of a family friend who had been astonished by Camille's precocity of intelligence that the lad was sent to the Collège Louis-le-Grand in Paris. Here, among other college chums, he formed a friendship with a studious and silent youth named Maxi-

milien Robespierre, who was afterwards to have supreme power over Desmoulins' life and death, and here, in an atmosphere of youthful enthusiasm and academic idealism, Camille became a brilliant and promising young student, an indefatigable versifier, an ardent young politician. Cicero and Plato filled his brain with the vision of an ideal State, and the reading of Greek poets gave him that command of satire and classical allusion which he was to put to such terrible use in the revolutionary journalism of his manhood.

Returning to Guise, he became an advocate in his native town, and the political ideals with which he had been inspired by the Greek philosophers were turned into more modern shape, though always based upon classical examples, by the increasing political excitement which surged over France when Necker summoned the States-General. Disappointed at not being elected a deputy of his province, Camille set out for Paris on the eve of the assembling of the Three Estates at Versailles, determined to take some kind of part in the great events with which the time was pregnant. Unable to make himself heard in the States-General, he would become the journalist of the revolution and an orator of the populace. Having that Gallic vanity which craves notoriety more than power, Camille Desmoulins waited for the propitious hour when he might take his place in history. That hour came, as we have seen, when, mounted on a table in the Palais Royal, he called his fellow-citizens to arms and led the crusade against the prison-fortress which symbolised oppression. In his pocket at this time was a work by which he hoped to win a reputation as a writer with the same audacity that he had leapt above the heads of the populace and constituted himself the leader of revolution. It was a work entitled ' La France libre,' a document more dangerous than dynamite, more eloquent than the stammering voice that had denounced

the evils of despotism from a tavern table. It was a survey of the tyranny of French kings, a damning indictment of autocratic government. It was a gospel of revolution, a grim satire in which each shaft of wit was an arrow shot at the heart of the *ancien régime*, a hammer which beat out a red-hot argument glowing with republican fervour. What is the constitution which would best suit France? That was his question, which he put abruptly and harshly before his countrymen. And though it might cost him his head, he gave the answer of his soul. A Republic! 'That is the only government which suits men, Frenchmen, and the Frenchmen of this century.'

A Republic! In those early days of the States-General the word might be whispered in private salons, but not spoken aloud. Camille Desmoulins, less cautious, wrote it in large letters on his page, made it his text, lingered over it, repeated it a hundred times, dinned it into the ears of his readers, would hear of no other word for France. Camille was audacious. Before the destruction of the Bastille no bookseller would risk his head to publish that 'France libre.' But when the Bastille had fallen and the people had proved their power, it was issued to the world in plain print, and Desmoulins achieved his heart's desire. He was a famous man. Even now, however, though every deputy of the States-General and every politician read that document, it was not with open approval. This Camille Desmoulins went too fast. Not yet was France ready to hear that word 'Republic' without a shiver of fear at the thought of what it meant. Not yet were the French people ready to spill the blood of kings.

But Camille rejoiced in his notoriety, and when the people grew more turbulent and the cry of '*À la lanterne!*' echoed down the streets of Paris above the tumult of a crowd

dragging unpopular persons to ready-made gallows, he sent forth another essay on the art of revolution, calling it by the grim title of 'A Discourse from the Lantern to the Parisians.'

He took for his text the old Latin proverb that 'those who do evil hate the light,' a phrase which he rendered, with a wit which would have been admirable if it had not been so terrible, as 'Rascals do not like the lantern.' In this discourse Camille played with edged tools. It is doubtful whether his demand for 'vigorous measures' against the enemies of liberty really increased the number of aristocrats who dangled from the street-lamps of Paris. The people who were guilty of these acts of vengeance were mostly too ignorant to read or understand such literature, or any literature. They were the human wolves of civilisation. Nevertheless, among the intellectual classes of France who did read this dangerous and violent tract of the times Camille Desmoulins was called 'le procureur-général de la lanterne,' a title which flattered his vanity for a little while before the great atrocities of the Revolution had been enacted, but filled him with remorse when the dance round the lantern had become an everyday game. After this terrible *jeu d'esprit* he now launched himself upon the stormy sea of revolutionary journalism by starting a paper called 'Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant,' in which he commented upon the events of the Revolution in a style which has never been equalled in the world's journalism for its wit, its light-hearted irony, its youthful audacity, its bitter and violent energy, its exquisite grace of literary craftsmanship. By means of this newspaper Desmoulins became one of the recognised leaders of the Revolution and one of the most notorious characters of the time. Even his abiding love of notoriety was almost satisfied, but the vanity with which his whole soul was possessed pricked him on to fresh

audacities. He played with bomb-shells like a child with toy balloons. He jested with death as if it were a droll and merry thing. He scattered accusations against the characters of men who had been his friends, and who were certainly not the enemies of France, with the same lightheartedness that one might banter in a club-room, or with a violence that might be permitted to irresponsible young men at a debating society where no harm is done when the meeting is over. He did not seem to realise that at that time in France an accusation was almost as good as a condemnation, and that a bitter jest led men to the guillotine. When he did realise that his words had been arrows of death to some of the noblest men in France and to his own best friends, those words returned to his own heart, wounding him with a poignant and unavailing remorse.

But all this time Camille the firebrand was Camille the lover, and, while he played with tragedy, played Romeo also to a little Juliet. When he came to Paris he lodged in the small but respectable Hôtel de Pologne. He was a poor man and relied upon his parents for the allowance which enabled him to live. There is still a letter in existence in which the young hero of the Revolution begs his father to send him six louis and some new shirts. He was therefore not legitimately in a position to go a-courting. But love laughs at ways and means until after the marriage-day, and Camille Desmoulins was caught up in the flame of a great passion which allowed no thoughts of prudence. In the gardens of the Luxembourg, under the light shadows of green foliage, he met Lucile Duplessis, the daughter of a wealthy *bourgeois*. She was seventeen years of age, a child at heart, a thing of daintiness and innocence, a pretty being filled with the mystery of coming womanhood, with the desires of spring, with the confidence of girlhood in heroic

manhood, with the sweet impulses of love for the unknown man who one day would draw her to his heart and claim her as his own. She haunted those Luxembourg gardens like some wood-nymph, stealing away into the loneliest paths where other footsteps did not often tread the carpet of leaves, loving the twilight time and the still silence of winter under the naked branches, liking to come here alone to listen to the beating of her own little heart, and to dream of such things as girls may dream. Often after such lonely hours she would go back and creep like a mouse to her bedroom, sitting with a red-backed book upon her lap scribbling down tender little verses, and *pensées* fragrant as the pansies which poets have called the flowers of thought, and prayers too secret almost to be published now. Yet the contents of that red-backed book have been printed, and those reveries in verse and prayer are very moving to the imagination of those who know the cruel fate of the little heart from which they fluttered like singing birds. To Lucile Duplessis came Camille Desmoulins one day, and she knew him to be the young man of her vague visions. In his ardent black eyes she saw her fate, and as she listened to his quick, stuttering speech, she heard that voice which she must follow through life to death. It was an idyll that lasted three years. This Romeo did not find favour in the eyes of Père Duplessis, the wealthy *bourgeois*. He was poor, and therefore undesirable as a son-in-law. Worse still, perhaps, if anything could be worse than poverty, he was a political firebrand, who in all probability would be burnt up in his own flames. The editor of 'Les Révolutions de France' was the last man on earth whom any sensible father would choose for his daughter's husband.

So it happened that Camille and Lucile had to continue stolen meetings, and after all stolen meetings between two

lovers are sweeter far than stolen fruits. Sometimes Madame Duplessis, who, like most mothers, was on the side of sentiment, contrived to bring the couple together without her husband's knowledge or in defiance of his anger. But more often Camille met Lucile in the quiet retreats of the Luxembourg gardens, where they had first met and discovered their love. Around them Paris was in revolution. While they held each other's hands and looked into each other's eyes, men were being strung up to lamp-posts above the heads of yelling mobs, whose shouts might almost be heard on the breeze. While they strolled slowly down some leafy avenue, feeling that unutterable carelessness of the whole world which some people call the selfishness of love, a Queen was weeping in despair within a stone's throw of them, and starving people were roaming through the streets of Paris demanding her death. Camille himself had perhaps just hurried from his lodging, the stain of ink upon his fingers with which he had written words that waged war against his King and Queen, against all aristocrats, against the very men who had helped to make the Revolution. Yet in the gardens of the Luxembourg they strolled as though they lived in Arcadie, and all was peace around them, like turtle-doves who build their nest in a wood where men are fighting a battle and moistening the turf with blood.

Yet no doubt Camille told all his secret thoughts to Lucile, revealed his ambitions, taught her his political creed, and made her a little revolutionist as ardent as himself. She believed in him, and had faith in his heroism, and was caught up in the fire of his revolutionary ideals. She was proud to share his hopes and his dangers, and when she married him it was with the full knowledge that one day she might weep for him at the foot of a guillotine.

It was in December 1790 that their marriage took place

Père Duplessis having been persuaded to give his consent after three years' refusal. Camille had hastened, in his joy, to tell the glad news of his consent to his parents, and it is a pretty picture he describes :

'When her mother had given her to me, only a minute ago she took me into her room ; I threw myself at Lucile's feet ; surprised to hear her laugh, I raised my eyes ; her own were not in any better condition than mine ; she was indeed in tears ; she even cried abundantly, and yet she still laughed. I have never seen such a ravishing figure, and I should not have imagined that nature and sensibility could unite such contrasts in this way.'

The marriage took place on December 29 at St. Sulpice, and among the witnesses were Maximilien Robespierre, Jérôme Pétion, and J. N. Brissot, deputies of the National Assembly. Strange and tragic ceremony, if those who took part in it could have seen into the future. Before three years had passed, every one of those people, the young husband and wife, Robespierre, Pétion, and Brissot, had fallen victims to the guillotine.

But worse than the tragedy of their deaths was the manner of their dying. It was Desmoulins who hounded Brissot to the guillotine after his friend had denounced him ; it was Robespierre who wrote the accusation which brought Desmoulins to the scaffold. These men who signed their names side by side on the marriage contract of Camille and Lucile were to be enemies to the death before many months had passed.

But now, on that morning of December, all were gay and joyous and there was much embracing and jovial *camaraderie* among the friends gathered together for the wedding. The young married couple had found a nest in a lodging-house in the rue du Commerce, and here they enjoyed all the delights

of happy love. Camille was ecstatic, his sensitive temperament and bounteous imagination turned home into a little heaven, filled it with celestial music and clothed his girl-wife in the glamour of divine beauty. He walked on air during the first months of his marriage, and Lucile, not less imaginative and emotional than he, responded to his passionate love by giving her heart into his keeping with a joy of surrender.

They had for neighbours, in the next apartments, Monsieur and Madame Danton, a married couple equally happy in their love, and equally devoted, though not with the same youthful display of nuptial courtesy. It was natural that the neighbours should become intimate with each other. Often in the morning Danton's heavy tread would be heard on the stair, and Madame Desmoulins would release herself from her husband's embrace before he went to write his newspaper, with a little cry of '*Tiens!* it is M. Danton!' Then there would come a bold knock at the door and Danton's great figure would stand there, a quiet smile softening the harsh lines of his pock-marked face.

'*Bon jour, citoyen et citoyenne. Ça va bien ce matin?*'

We can imagine Camille leading forward the blushing Lucile with a '*Ça va très bien, n'est-ce pas?*'

And then Danton, 'Come along, my friend, to work. We must not neglect our poor nation even for our wives' sake. We must fight the enemies of liberty.' So they would go down the staircase and out into the streets of Paris, the burly giant of a man leaning on the arm of his young companion, striding heavily along while the other steps lightly at his side, breaking forth into rolling sentences of glowing passion, bursting into a loud hearty laugh at times, and then lapsing into silence and listening with an ironical smile to young Desmoulins who stutters out staccato notes

of speech, excited, volatile, incoherent, hot with the fire of his imagination. And the passers-by nudge each other, gazing after the two men with a '*Voyez donc—c'est Danton et Desmoulins! Mon Dieu, v'là des hommes!*' They go to the club of the Cordeliers, where the watchword of the new nation has been fashioned in the boiling caldron of revolutionary passion: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*; where Marat is 'roaring like a bull'; where Robespierre is making long academic speeches with a smirk of self-satisfaction; where Mirabeau pours out a stream of torrid eloquence not much to the liking of the Cordeliers, who find a flavour of royalism under its revolutionary fervour; where Danton himself mounts the tribune and deafens the ears of the Assembly with his thunderous audacities, infecting his audience with a fever of indignation against the reactionaries and aristocrats.

Meanwhile in the little room in the rue du Commerce Lucile sits waiting, waiting and working for the great happiness that is to come to her. And Madame Danton comes in, a gentle, womanly, tender-hearted soul, with helpful fingers and cheering words. Lucile has told her the great secret. A child is to be born to Camille Desmoulins. Surely, though France is in agony and travail, a whole world of happiness has been encompassed by the four walls of that little room where Lucile Desmoulins sits sewing and waiting. The wife of Danton and the wife of Desmoulins talk together, through the long hours, of their husbands, who are fighting for the liberty of their country. To many of their contemporaries the tribune of the people and the journalist of the Revolution may have seemed men of savage ideals and of vile character. To the Court party and the aristocrats they were devils in human form. But in the hearts of those two women in the rue du Commerce their husbands were enshrined as heroes and saints. They gave thanks to God

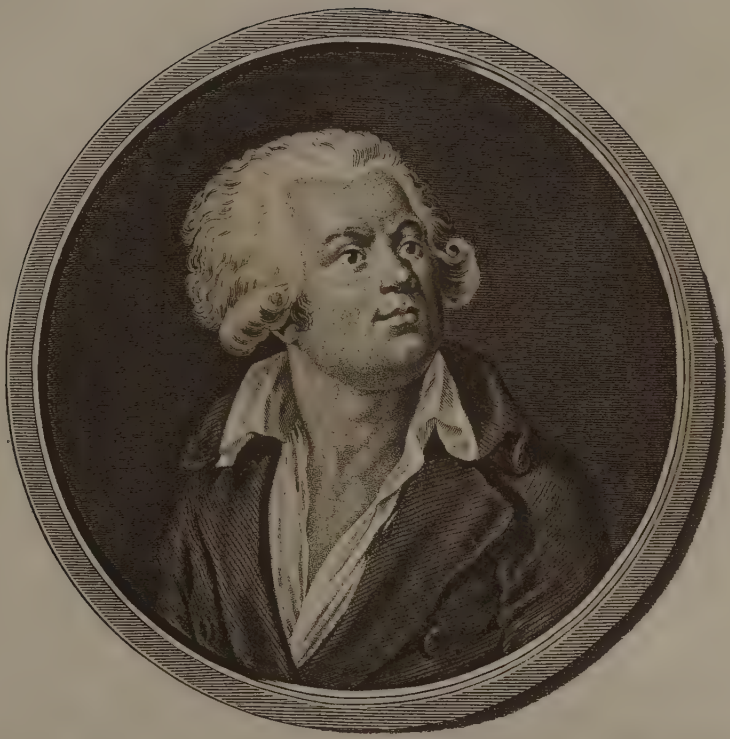
that they had married men who fought with such courage in the battle between the powers of good and evil, and prayed to God that they themselves might never unnerve such men by womanly weakness, or prove unable to make the sacrifice of lives which were daily endangered in the cause of righteousness. How different do men's motives seem when judged by those who hate and by those who love!

Great was the joy of Camille Desmoulins when little Horace was born. The tiny child that lay in the cradle called forth all his tenderest and gentlest instincts. It gave him a new reverence for Lucile, who had achieved this miracle of life. It brought a tiny angel into his earthly paradise. What a picture for a painter's brush, when Camille's friends gathered in his room to see the infant prodigy! There was Camille himself on one knee before the cradle, the 'procureur-général de la lanterne' beaming over a new-born child; and there was Robespierre, the man of Terror, uttering felicitous sentiments upon the promise of life and the blessings of domestic love; and Danton, the man of September, the apologist of massacre, with a gentle light in those dark eyes of his which so often glowed with passion, and a smile on his pock-marked massive face which has so often been described as 'terrible in its ugliness.' The men of Revolution, the apostles of a gospel of bloodshed, were paying homage to the God of love and peace!

Lucile Desmoulins, happy though she was as a rule, thinking, as most women do, that happiness itself is a safeguard against misfortune and danger, was not without occasional days and nights of terror. The first of these had come before the birth of her child. Lafayette and Bailly the mayor of Paris, terrified at the forces of democracy which they had themselves helped to unloose, began a counter-revolution by shedding the blood of citizens in the Champ

de Mars, and by attempting to arrest the revolutionary journalists of Paris. Desmoulins and Danton were among those for whom warrants had been issued, but they both escaped arrest owing to early news of what was on foot. They went into hiding in the house of a friend, but poor Camille, though he saved his neck, was in despair at having to discontinue his 'Révolutions de France.' He now had the habit of journalism strongly upon him, and for a day to pass without his writing an inflammatory article and reading it in print seemed to him the annihilation of twenty-four hours. They were days of terrible anxiety for Lucile Desmoulins in her delicate condition, but Lafayette had injured himself fatally by his criminal attempt to restore order by unnecessary bloodshed, and Desmoulins and Danton were soon able to come out of their hiding-places, inspired with more fierceness than before against the enemies of liberty.

Lucile's next days of terror were those preceding August 10, and that day itself, when the Palace of the Tuileries was sacked by the mob. It was Danton above all others who instigated the people to that act of destruction, bloodshed, and savagery. It was Danton who engineered the plot, and it was Desmoulins who set the fuse alight by his burning words of violence. Lucile was in the secret. She knew the danger that threatened all her happiness. On August 8 she dined with the Dantons and a little party of revolutionists who openly discussed 'the affair.' Danton was weeping, but 'I,' says Lucile, 'I myself laughed like a madwoman.' 'How can anyone laugh?' said astonished Madame Danton. 'Alas,' answered Lucile, 'it is only a warning that I shall shed many tears this evening.' The next day passed with increasing anxieties. Desmoulins was 'up to the neck in the Revolution,' so he wrote to his



Duplessi-Bertaux

DANTON.

little Lucile, bidding her not to weep because she could not see him. 'I have consecrated my day by proclaiming on my house, in the midst of three thousand national guards, the danger of the Fatherland.'

'How you would have been pleased to see me in the municipal cavalcade! . . . I was as proud as Don Quixote. . . . *Mon Dieu!* do not love me so much, *chère amie*, since it makes you suffer such a lot.' So with quaint pet names and fond endearments he writes gaily and tenderly, trying to reassure the wife who waited for him with beating heart. She, in the loneliness of her room, by the side of her sleeping babe, gave herself up to a night of anguish.

'What will become of us?' she wrote, finding a little relief perhaps in literary expression, such relief as she had found for the girlish thoughts which had troubled her brain before Camille had come into her life. 'I can suffer no more. Camille, oh my poor Camille, what will become of you? I have no more strength to breathe. It is to-night —the fatal night. My God! if it is true that Thou dost exist, then save the men who are worthy of Thee! We wish to be free. Oh God, how much it costs!' Camille had come home for a few moments, bringing a gun with him, and Lucile wept in his arms. 'However,' she writes in her note-book, 'not wishing to show too much weakness, or to say aloud to Camille that I did not want him to mix himself up with all this, I waited for the moment when I could speak to him without being heard, and tell him all my fears. He comforted me by saying that he would not leave Danton's side. I have known since, however, that he exposed himself.' There is a touch of pride, as well as of fear in those last words. That night the bell of the Cordeliers sounded the tocsin, and the wild clashing discord rang into the little room where Lucile watched over the baby Horace and

prayed for Camille. 'Alone, bathed in tears, kneeling close to the window, stifling my sobs in my handkerchief, I listened to the sound of that fatal bell.' Camille came in again and slept for a little while with his head on his wife's shoulder. Danton was at the Town Hall, and his Madame Danton, not less full of anguish than Lucile, came into their room and lay down on a chair bed. Then Camille left them early on the morning of August 10, that day of tragic history, and the two women remained alone. Through the window came the sounds of Paris, the dull tramp of a hundred thousand feet, the tocsin of many bells, the murmur of distant shouting, the echoes of wild songs sung by hoarse voices. Suddenly the window-panes rattled and a low booming sound dulled their ears.

'They are firing cannon,' said Lucile, with a sudden indrawing of the breath.

Madame Danton stood up, listening, listening, with tense horror, to that ominous thunder. Then suddenly she swayed and fell swooning to the floor. 'I undressed her myself,' wrote Lucile in her diary. 'I was ready to fall also, but the necessity for action with which I was faced gave me strength.'

And so hour after hour the two women waited, haggard and worn with a gnawing anxiety for the fate of the two men who were all the world to them. And always, from outside, the room was filled with the murmurous echoes of a populace in arms, with the mysterious refrains of unknown horrors. They could only guess what was happening. But they could guess too vividly. They knew that on this day the Tuileries would be attacked, and in their imagination they must have seen something of the deeds that were being enacted in reality—the surging mob clamouring around the palace, the shattered gates, the battering down of doors,

the sharp fight with the outer guards, the tramp of men's feet through puddles of blood, the rush forward through the palace corridors, the slaughter of the Swiss bodyguards, the exultant yells of victory, the wild destruction of everything that could be broken down or torn to pieces or cast into the courtyard, the loot of a treasure-house, the search for a royal family, perhaps the murder of a King and Queen! Such terrible pictures as these must have passed through the brains of the two women who listened with strained ears to the throbbing rumours of a great tumult; and but for the murder of the King and Queen those pictures in their brain would have been photographs of truth.

At last Camille came back, haggard and half fainting with exhaustion—but safe! Danton was also safe. Victory had been on the side of the people, but a victory not bloodless nor unstained by barbarous crime.

It was shortly after this attack on the Tuileries that Danton became Minister of Justice and Desmoulins deputy of the National Convention. Both of them owed their promotion, not to party influence, but to popularity. Both of them had been leaders of insurrection rather than political wirepullers. Danton had been the voice of the people, and Desmoulins the pen of the people. They now entered upon a new stage. The sack of the Tuileries and the September massacres had ended the first chapter of the Revolution. The vague, visionary ideals of a bloodless reformation of society, of a constitutional government accepted with enthusiasm by King and people, ended also with the last terrible pages of that historic chapter. It was seen now and written down in blood that it was to be a death struggle between class and class, a war, ruthless and unrelenting, between aristocracy and democracy. Perhaps it would be something more terrible still if the people were to have the

victory ; it would be worse than civil war. It would be the blind vengeance of a savage people who had the accumulated debt of centuries to be paid in blood. This handwriting of inexorable fate was so clearly written on the wall that no Frenchman could fail to read it—no Frenchman save one perhaps, and that the King. It was a task before which many brave men staggered back with a great fear in their hearts. Those who had been moved by strong impulses of liberal progress began to grope their way back again to the old ideals of order, founded, if necessary, on tyranny. Men who had gone gaily along the path of reform and revolution, believing that the forces of intellectual souls dominate the fierce passions of the nation, began to repent of their lightheartedness and, by a natural instinct of reaction, hated the very forces they had themselves unchained. Fear alone, fear of death by the guillotine or at the hands of the mob, kept them outwardly loyal, but in their hearts men like Lafayette, like Brissot, Roland, and the leaders of the Girondin or moderate party, were traitors to the advancement of the revolutionary principles to their ruthless conclusions. They were traitors not because of ignoble treachery but because of a humanitarianism that could not bear the thought of innocent blood being shed for the deliverance of a people from oppression, or the vision of a King and a noble order being exterminated for the sake of social reformation. On the other side, the leaders of the people who were ready to wade through blood if it led to the goal of freedom saw in this wave of reactionary feeling the blackest treachery and cowardice, the most dangerous plots to rebuild the old structure of despotism. Their passion for liberty flamed out with fierce hatred of every sign and symbol of class privilege and power. The King, weak and amiable and virtuous as he was, became in their eyes a monster of

iniquity. In their hearts suspicion smouldered constantly: suspicion against all men of moderation, against men who had been their closest friends, against men who were not as fierce and passionate as themselves. Treachery was in the air. Plots lurked in every corner. No man could be trusted, or very few. On both sides there was fear, and fear is always the basis of cruelty. So it was that men like Marat and Danton and Desmoulins lost their instincts of humanity and became public prosecutors, self-appointed and untrammelled by law or justice or self-restraint.

The first object of their vengeance was the King himself. Louis must die because as long as he lived he would be the head and centre of reaction. All their enthusiasm for his former liberalism was changed into gall by his attempts to escape from his people and by his impotence to crush down the counter-revolutionary plots of his own household and the royal *émigrés*. Danton denounced him, and Desmoulins, who had once rendered him homage as a magnanimous monarch, now lashed himself into a frenzy of passionate loathing against him. It was Desmoulins who put the following motion before the Convention, a proposal so violent in its language that it reveals an unbalanced and hysterical mind:

'The National Convention declares that Louis Capet deserves to die. It decrees that the scaffold shall be erected in the Place du Carrousel, whither Louis shall be conducted, wearing on his breast these words: "Perjurer and Traitor to the nation," and on the back another label bearing the word "King," in order to show the world that the degradation of nations cannot efface the crimes committed by royalty even after the lapse of fifteen centuries; it also decrees that the tomb of the Kings at St. Denis shall henceforth be the burial-place of thieves, murderers, and traitors.'

When the death vote was taken the National Convention

was surrounded by a savage mob who had already sentenced Louis to the guillotine and would not be balked of their prey. A crowd of them pushed their way into the hall, pursuing a deputy who had been accused of sympathy for the King with shouts of 'Death! Death! Either his death or yours!' The galleries were filled with loose women, the leaders of the market dames and the mistresses of the deputies. They laughed and talked incessantly with an hysterical ribaldry, fluttering their tricolour scarves at the deputies below and calling to them by name. Ushers went about with oranges, ices, and cooling drinks. It was like a scene in a music-hall, and a stranger would hardly have realised the grim tragedy that was being enacted save for the pale and haggard faces of the deputies, who sat staring at the little cards on which they were to write down their votes. Some of them had already written the verdict, then, with trembling hands, erased the words to write them down again when the savage murmurous roar of the mob outside sent a shudder of fear through them at the thought of the dread penalty which would perhaps be the price of mercy. Only one man had the courage to protest against the villainy of this public voting. It was Lanjuinais, the Girondin, who sprang to his feet with angry words. 'You have cast aside every form which justice and honesty required,' he said. 'Full liberty of action can be enjoyed only when the vote is taken by ballot. This assembly has the appearance of being a free convention, but it is controlled by the daggers and guns of the factions.' He was shouted down by Marat and by the women in the galleries; and in the uproar of this savage demonstration men who would have voted willingly for anything but death were now afraid to brave the hatred and cruelty of the great majority. There was no doubt as to the result of the voting. The King

must die. The Revolution could not be accomplished until the blood of the Capet had been offered up as a sacrifice for the sins of his race.

On September 21, 1792, the following motion was put before the representatives of the nation: 'The National Convention decrees that the monarchy is abolished in France.' The first to rise was Philippe 'Egalité,' Duc d'Orléans, and even among the men who had clamoured for the head of Louis there passed a shudder of repulsion at the appearance of that bloated wretch who sought safety in the blood of his kinsman and King.

But the Jacobins did not hesitate as to the logical conclusion of their endeavours. 'The abolition of the monarchy,' cried Collot d'Herbois in a fever of excitement, 'is a matter that you cannot put off till to-morrow, that you cannot put off till to-night, that you cannot put off one moment without betraying the wishes of the nation.'

The Abbé Grégoire exhausted himself with violence: 'There never was a dynasty that was not a devouring race, living on human flesh. I demand that a solemn law be passed abolishing the monarchy.' Some members were for discussing the matter in a calmer and more philosophical spirit. But the Abbé Grégoire shouted them down. 'What need is there for discussion?' he said fiercely. 'Kings are morally what monsters are physically. Courts are the workshops of crime, the lairs of tyrants. History is the martyrology of nations.' Although that night the monarchy was abolished in France, the word 'Republic' was not heard from a single speaker. By some curious psychological subtlety the National Convention restrained themselves from the use of a word which would now be the name of the new nation. It was only on the next day that the Convention decreed that all public acts should date from the first

year of the Republic. Thus was the Revolution accomplished, and well would it have been if the people of France had been satisfied with the blood that had already been shed for fertilising a soil with freedom.

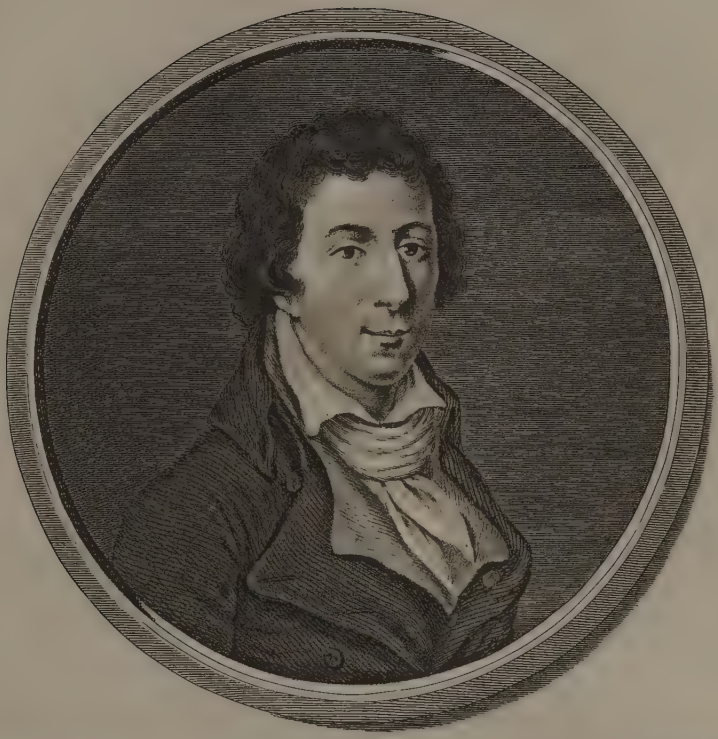
The leaders of the people—Marat the People's Friend, Danton the orator, Desmoulins the journalist, Robespierre the incorruptible—were not satisfied. Marat denounced a new 'counter-revolutionary plot' with every issue of his journal, and demanded more blood. Danton established his 'Revolutionary Tribunal' for the trial of traitors and 'suspects.' Desmoulins, as violent as Marat himself, though with more playfulness of wit, steeped his pen in vitriol; and Robespierre, more subtle and more deadly than anyone in his ambition for power, pulled the strings which let fall the knife of the guillotine upon the head of any man who stood in the way of his supremacy. The King was dead, but the Queen still lived. Desmoulins would not spare her. Even Lucile, his gentle Lucile, demanded the sacrifice of the Queen upon the altar of a people's vengeance. Her imagination had been completely dominated by the spirit of the man she loved so well. There is no more amazing document in history than those pages on which she put herself in the place of Marie Antoinette and wrote: 'What I would do if I were in her place.' This timid little wife who trembled if her husband left her for a night, this fond young mother who crooned over her baby's cradle with passionate love, recommended her Queen to give herself as a burnt offering to the nation, not waiting until she 'was dragged from her prison to the scaffold,' but erecting an altar and a pile of faggots, there to pray for three days in public to 'the great Master of the universe,' before she ascended the funeral pile to be burnt alive. 'This ceremony would take place at midnight in the glare of torches.' If Lucile Desmoulins

could indulge in such imaginings, it is no wonder that men of gross passions and cruel hearts should have been turned into torturers and devils. When the Queen was dead and the guillotine had its daily food of aristocrats, Robespierre and Camille Desmoulins, now the faithful henchman of Robespierre, were still unsatisfied. Desmoulins under the influence of his evil genius went gaily on with the work of deadly criticism and whetted his irony on men who had once been his good friends—on men who had done most to establish the Republic. His accusations were wholesale. His savage cynicism was unrestrained. In his 'History of the Brissotins' he impeached whole groups of men who had formerly been the hope of France.

'Necker, Orléans, Lafayette, Chapelier, Mirabeau, Bailly, Desmeunier, Duport, Lameth, Pastoret, Cerutti, Brissot, Ramond, Pétion, Guadet, Gensonné'—so he wrote down the string of names with the glibness of a cheapjack—'have been the impure vases of Amasis, with which has been founded, in the matrice of the Jacobins, the golden statue of the Republic. And contrary to what has been thought until our own time, that it was impossible to found a Republic except with virtue, as among the ancient legislators, the immortal glory of this society is of *having created the Republic with vice.*' He accused Brissot of being an assassin and a thief. He denounced the hypocrisy of Roland, the venality of Guadet, the complicity of Gensonné with the traitor Dumouriez. Finally, after pages of bitter and acid irony, he proposed that the Brissotins 'should be vomited from the womb of the Convention,' and 'the Revolutionary Tribunal should suffer amputations.' If is hardly a defence of Desmoulins to say that he was animated by a sense of literary audacity and the joy of intellectual combat; that when the men he had accused with a gay *insouciance* had

been brought to the guillotine, he was astounded at the result of his own words, and a prey to despair and remorse. Yet this was what happened. Between Robespierre's subtlety of suggestion and Marat's violence of denunciation, with Desmoulins as the official pleader, Danton as minister of so-called 'Justice,' and the people of Paris as the jury, the party of the Girondins was doomed. When twenty-one of them were brought to trial and condemned to death, Robespierre and Marat rejoiced. But, for the first time during the Revolution, Danton and Desmoulins recoiled from the work of bloodshed. They were suddenly awakened to the horror that was around them and over their heads. With one of those shocks, partly physical and partly psychological, which sometimes give sight to the blind, they saw for the first time that this Reign of Terror was a worse despotism than the monarchy which had been destroyed. Remorse at their own heedless cruelty worked a great revulsion in their hearts, and the cry of an outraged humanity clamoured at their ears. During the trial of the men who had been his friends Camille sat staring before him with a blanched and haggard face, and from his trembling lips came hoarse words of pity and self-reproach. 'My God! my God!' he whispered with a groan. 'It is I who have killed them!' When the dread sentence was pronounced amidst the deepest silence, he tried to stagger up and leave the hall. 'I am going away. I am going away,' he kept repeating in a dazed manner. 'I wish to go away. But horror enchained him, and he could not stir.

Danton was not less moved. All his violence had departed from him, and the great heart that had been so often inflamed with passion was now filled with intense compassion and humanity. Jules Claretie tells us how, one night after this tragic episode, Danton was walking home with Camille to



Duplessi Bertaux

BRISSOT

their apartments in the rue du Commerce when they crossed the Seine. Danton stopped and pointed out to his friend how the setting sun, behind the heights of Passy, reflected its ruddy rays in the flowing river, so that it seemed like a stream of blood. 'Look,' said Danton, and as he spoke Camille saw that his friend's eyes were filled with tears, 'Look at all that blood! The Seine flows with blood! Ah! too much blood has been spilt. Come, take up your pen, write and ask for clemency. I will support you!'

From that time both Danton and Desmoulins were different men. As they had demanded a reign of terror, so now they pleaded for a reign of peace. In the 'Vieux Cordelier,' a new paper issued by Desmoulins, the gospel of mercy was preached with the same energy and courage with which the gospel of revolution had been set forth in 'Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant.' Desmoulins did not falter from his task, and he worked out his repentance for 'The History of the Brissotins' with the fervour of enthusiasm. At first Robespierre gave the work his patronage, reading the first few numbers of the paper with secretly expressed approval. He too wished an end of the Reign of Terror, for now that the Girondins had been annihilated his own safety demanded peace. But the advanced Jacobins, like Billaud-Varennes and Saint-Just, the men of Terror, regarded Camille Desmoulins and Danton as worse traitors than the Girondins who had been wiped off the earth on account of their hesitating and moderate policy. By terror they had attained their power, and by terror they meant still to reign. Their stern denunciation of the two friends of clemency frightened Robespierre, who, with his foxy mind, saw that he would perish unless he still advanced upon the tide of terrorism. He immediately repudiated Camille and all his works, but he was still sufficiently loyal to his friendship to offer a loop-

hole of escape for the accused man. He submitted that the offending numbers of the 'Vieux Cordelier' should be burnt, but that Desmoulins, their author, should be let off with this warning, on account of his natural hot-headed temperament, and the services he had rendered to the public.

'Camille,' he said, with his finest air of virtuous condescension, 'Camille is a spoilt child. He had a happy disposition, but he has been led astray by evil company.'

Camille sprang to his feet, white with rage.

'You approved the articles which I read to you before publication,' he retorted scornfully.

'I have read only two of the numbers,' said Robespierre coldly.

An angry altercation took place, in which Camille, rash as ever, refused the loophole of escape by goading into open animosity the one man who could save him from the guillotine.

'Look here, Camille,' said Robespierre at last with a glint of fire in his steely blue eyes. 'If you were not Camille we should not show you so much indulgence. The way in which you dare to justify yourself shows me that your intentions were evil.'

'My intentions!' shouted Desmoulins. 'Did you not know all about them? Was I not at home with you? Did I not read you my papers?'

This suggestion that Robespierre had been his accomplice in clemency terrified the man into relentlessness.

Desmoulins's doom was sealed. Robespierre himself indicted an accusation against his former friend and follower to the public prosecutor.

Danton was to share the fate of his friend, and others who had been numbered among the 'Dantonists'—Hérault de Séchelles, Fabre d'Eglantine, and Phélippeaux. With

the Dantonists stood also Chabot, ex-priest, guilty of having married a rich wife, and his two brothers-in-law, named Frey, guilty of being rich Jews.

Danton had been given full warning. He had gone down into the country, with his second and newly married wife, away from the turmoil of revolution into the peace of nature and domestic love. Sitting by the hearth, as when a boy he had so often sat dreaming while he stared into the flames, all the fever of his soul was soothed and a profound serenity possessed him. He knew that death would soon come to him, and that knowledge gave to this strong vigorous giant of a man something of that wonderful calmness and quietude which surrounds the bed of dying people. He pondered upon his own past deeds and passions with the detached mind of a man whose deeds are done in this life, whose passions are stilled for ever. Death had no terror for him. It is probable that he welcomed it as a happy release. His friends urged him to fly. 'Can one carry away the Fatherland on one's shoes?' he asked. They urged him to assert himself, to crush his enemies. 'I prefer being guillotined to guillotining,' he answered. Perhaps he still had a secret belief in his own power over the imagination and affection of the French people. When he was told that his enemies were going to arrest him, he threw his head back and said, 'They dare not,' sleeping that night as soundly as a little child. When he was seized at last he was calm and scornful. 'I leave the whole business in a frightful welter,' he said. 'Not one of them understands anything of government. Robespierre will follow me. I drag down Robespierre!' Then with a great sadness in his voice he said, 'Oh, it were better to be a poor fisherman than to meddle with the governing of men!'

He recovered all his old audacity, however, as soon as

he stepped across the threshold of his prison. To Thomas Paine, the American economist, who had thrown in his lot with the Revolution, and was now arrested and accused as a reactionary, he said, 'They are sending me to the scaffold. *Eh bien*, I shall go gaily!'

Poor Camille had none of this natural courage and *bonhomie* with death. His sensitive nature was prostrated, and in his prison at the Luxembourg he suffered acute anguish at the thought of the great happiness of life which was no more to be his. He had been too happy to die resignedly. He had made himself a little paradise on earth, and did not pant for the joys of a spiritual heaven. Lucile had been his good angel. He loved her with the same passion and infinite tenderness as when he had clasped her hands in the gardens of the Luxembourg, which he now looked down upon from his prison window. Little Horace, his baby son, had made another strong link between him and life. Oh, it was hard to die! He shed bitter and futile tears, crying out against his cruel fate, and in the letters which he wrote to his wife we may still read the passionate despair which drowned him in a flood of self-pity. Yet in the midst of his despair he sought to justify himself, and obtained some consolation from the egotism which had always glorified his triumph.

'I carry with me the esteem and the regrets of all true republicans.' 'I die at thirty-four; but it is a miracle that for five years I have crossed so many precipices of the Revolution without falling in, that I still exist, and that I may rest my head on the pillow of my writings, too numerous indeed, but all animated by the same philanthropy, by the same desire to make my fellow-citizens happy and free, which even the axe cannot destroy. . . . I have dreamed of a republic which all the world would have adored. I

could not believe that men were so ferocious and so unjust. How could I think that certain pleasantries in my writings against colleagues who had provoked me would efface the memory of my services! I do not conceal that I die a victim of these pleasantries and of my friendship to Danton. I thank my assassins for letting me die with him and Phélippeaux, and since my colleagues are such cowards as to abandon us and listen to calumnies of which I know nothing except that they are most grossly false, I can say that we die victims of our courage in denouncing traitors and of our love of truth. We can indeed carry away with us this testimony, that we die the last of the republicans.'

He asks his wife's pardon for thinking so much of the memory he will leave behind him. 'I should rather try to make you forget it.' He calls her by all the pet names which he used to give her, and asks her to speak of him often to little Horace, whom he would have loved so well, and to all the dear ones of his family.

'In spite of my agony,' he continues, 'I believe there is a God. My blood will wash away my faults, the weaknesses of humanity, and God will reward me for what was good in me, my virtues, my love of liberty. I will see you again one day. Oh, Lucile! oh, Annette! Sensitive as I was, is death, which will rid me of the sight of so many crimes, so great a misfortune? Farewell, Loulou, my wife, my soul, my divinity on earth! I leave you with good friends, with the most sensible and virtuous people who still live. Farewell, Lucile! my Lucile! my dear Lucile! Farewell, Horace, Annette, Adèle! Farewell, my father! I see the banks of my life fly behind me. I see Lucile again! I see her, my well-beloved, my Lucile! My fettered hands embrace you, and my severed head regards you still with dying eyes!'

they give us free speech,' he said, 'I am certain of confounding my accusers, and if the French people is what it ought to be, I shall be obliged to plead for mercy for them.' That was what his judges feared, and for that reason free speech was not to be given. The accused were brought into court again to learn that the trial was finished and that sentence would be pronounced.

Danton would not believe such villainy. 'No proof has been produced against us,' he cried. 'No witness has yet been heard!'

'It is an infamy,' cried one of the accused. 'We are judged without being heard,' said another. 'They do not judge us, they murder us!' 'Let them take us to the scaffold!'

Cries of rage, fierce curses, and hoarse shouts of indignation filled the court with a storm of dreadful sound. But Herman, the president, gave the order for the accused to be taken away. Gendarmes seized them. One only fought with desperate resistance. It was Camille Desmoulins who clung to his bench and struggled with three men who tried to tear him violently away. He was carried, cursing, from the court. Danton behaved with greater courage and dignity. He suffered himself to be led out, giving one last glance of fierce disdain. As yet the sentence had not been pronounced, nor had the jury given their verdict. But this was done during the absence of the prisoners by order of Fouquier-Tinville the public prosecutor on account of 'the indecency, the violence, and the blasphemy of the accused.'

They died bravely, those men, all but Camille, who struggled with his gaolers, tore his shirt into ribbons, and gave way to hysterical anguish. On his way to the scaffold in the death-cart he made a last appeal to the crowd in a frantic voice :

Duplessis Berteaux

CAMILLE DESMOULINS

'People, you are deceived. People, it is those who have served you who are to be destroyed. It was I who called you to arms in '89. It was I who shouted the first cry of liberty. My crime, my only crime, is of having shed tears.'

He was answered only by jeers and gross abuse.

'Be calm,' said Danton who faced the crowd with a high head and scornful eyes. 'Be quiet, and leave alone that *canaille*.'

On the scaffold Camille Desmoulins regained some courage. He gazed at the bloody knife of the guillotine. 'This, then,' he said, 'is the end of liberty's first apostle!' Between his manacled hands he clasped a lock of Lucile's hair. It was the vision of Lucile's face smiling upon him and giving him strength in those last moments of his life that now obscured the sight of the pitiless crowd below. It was Lucile's name that came from his lips when he was thrown upon the plank. 'Oh my poor wife!' he cried, and with those words his head fell into the basket.

Not many days afterwards Lucile herself stood on the same scaffold. She came as a bride to her marriage, smiling, and pervaded with a spirit of sweetness and joy. She was accused because, during Camille's imprisonment, she had haunted the ground beneath his window, trying vainly to communicate with him by signs. She was sentenced to death for no other crime than that of love for her husband. 'Oh joy!' she cried upon hearing her condemnation. 'In a few hours, then, I shall again see my Camille!' Then, gazing calmly upon her judges, she said, 'In leaving this world, where that which I have loved no longer holds me, I am less to be pitied than you; for until your punishment, which will be infamous, remorse will possess you for what you have done.'

Upon mounting the scaffold she held her head high,

her face shining with a spiritual gladness. 'They have assassinated the best of men,' she said, rebuking her enemies. 'If I did not hate them for that, I should bless them for the service they render me to-day.' So strong was her love as a wife that her mother's love was subordinate—a rare thing in woman's nature. In thinking of her Camille she forgot her little Horace, or at least the thought of the child did not make her falter. She went to the guillotine with a sublime courage which contrasts brightly with the weakness of poor Camille. Among those who saw the dainty child's face, so fresh in its beauty, so sweet in its innocence, looking upwards as she stood for a moment on the scaffold, there were many who in their hearts cursed the hour when such a crime could be committed in the name of liberty.

'Good-night, my dear mamma,' Lucile had written in a farewell letter to her mother. 'One tear escapes from my eyes; it is for thee. I am going to sleep in the peace of innocence.' She lay upon the board beneath the knife as if upon a bed of roses, and it was with a smile that her soul went quivering from its fair vessel of the flesh.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ROYAL FAMILY AT THE TUILERIES AND THE TEMPLE

SUFFERING and sorrow, when they are intense and dramatic, wipe out the most grievous stains upon the character of their victims, and exalt the most commonplace mortals to an heroic rank. If Louis XVI. had died peaceably in his bed, and if the hair of Marie Antoinette had withered into whiteness by the natural process of old age, they would have been summed up in history as an uninteresting couple. Or at least the most favourable verdict would have been that Louis was a good man and a hearty eater, and that his consort was a woman of some beauty and considerable fascination, with an uncertain temper and a strong will. But their long martyrdom of danger, insult, and brutal treatment, ending in the tragedy of violent death, has won for them the world's sympathy, and almost the worship of many tender and enthusiastic souls. The somewhat gross and bovine character of the King has not been so much remembered as the calm dignity of his last years of life, or as the really noble courage of his death, while Marie Antoinette has stirred the imagination and received the idealising homage of many generations, even as much as that other Mary and unhappy lady, the Queen of Scots. Yet this is not only because the intensity of suffering and sorrow, bravely borne, stirs the chords of sympathy even in ordinarily cold hearts, but because, bravely borne, it does bring out the noblest qualities of human character. Louis XVI. was really nothing but a dull-witted,

hearty-eating, amiable and moral man until some finer strain in his character, inherited through many generations of ancestors, who with all their vices had for the most part the supreme virtue of courage, was revealed and strengthened by tragic circumstance. Then he became almost a hero, showing at least a passive heroism of long patience and calm endurance, of dignity and quietude in the face of a horrible death. And Marie Antoinette, who had been but a queen of ordinary moral worth, though no doubt of extraordinary charm, was refined and ennobled by her long suffering, so that all her faults and foolishness—and both were grievous—are effaced by the memory of her indomitable courage, of her sublime resignation, of her beautiful and unassailable self-respect.

The Queen's troubles began, as we have seen, from the time when the affair of the Diamond Necklace revealed to her the dark pitfalls of unpopularity into which she had fallen. To Madame Campan, her waiting-woman, she lamented, however, that the long series of her misfortunes dated from the death of her child, the Princess Sophie. This was about a year before the opening of the States-General, and the mother's heart, lacerated by this first wound, suffered more terribly when, a year after this loss, she saw that her eldest son, the young Dauphin, was also doomed. The poor boy, who had appeared exceptionally strong and healthy, developed the disease of rickets, and became so thin and twisted and deformed, and so decrepit, that he seemed like a little old man rather than a child in the spring of life. To the Queen this withering of her child may have seemed an omen of the fate that was encircling the royal family of France with dark and dreadful shadows. Like many children who are prematurely old with suffering, he was also prematurely wise, and his solemn questions as to the meaning of the

violent episodes which followed the opening of the States-General, and the expression of his wonder at the enmity of the people towards his parents, were like arrows in the heart of Marie Antoinette. Many were the tears she shed in secret while showing a cold and brave face in public at this time. Madame de Lâge writes about the Dauphin in her Memoirs: 'The poor child is so ill! It is incredible all the poor little one says. He breaks the Queen's heart, his love for her is so extreme. The other day he begged her to dine in his room. Alas, she swallowed more tears than bread.'

That spring of 1789, so full of promise and bright hopes for the people of France, was for the Queen and the royal family a time of evil portents. To Marie Antoinette, highly strung and at times hysterical, the very air was filled with omens of disaster, and the voices of the people, of that great mysterious people divided by a wide gulf from the high and lonely throne, floating on the breeze through palace windows, or heard in snatch sentences in the streets, were menacing and suggestive of dread terror. Strange grotesque figures, like that of the Marquis de St. Huruge, enormous and ferocious, with a curious mad light in his eyes, prowled around the palace, uttering threats against the monarchy under the open windows. Horrible women's voices, hoarse and obscene, rose in shrill threatening cries as the Queen passed in public. On that day when the King and Queen went in state to the opening of the Assembly, one shout was repeated with significant iteration: '*Vive le duc d'Orléans! Vive Orléans!*' Such enthusiasm for the enemy of the true sovereigns was in itself a chill and depressing omen. Louis was calm and impassive then as usual; he was not worried with omens, and faced the Three Estates with confidence and dignity and affability, dictating to them in his royal speech, with the old stock-phrases of royalty that were listened to with

an open impatience, apparent to all but the King himself. But the Queen, though she held her head high, with a pale, cold pride, had a terror in her heart which she could not crush down. Her nerves were overwrought, her imagination was sensitive to the electricity of revolution already charging the atmosphere with destructive power. Trivial incidents that would have passed unnoticed or unregarded seemed like the finger-marks of fate.

One evening, so her waiting-woman relates, the Queen was preparing to go to bed. Four wax candles were placed upon her toilette table. Suddenly one of them went out without apparent reason. A little while afterwards the second and then the third went out. Marie Antoinette became as pale as death, and seized her woman's hand with an emotion of terror. 'Misfortune has power to make us superstitious,' she said, in a troubled voice. 'If the fourth taper should go out like the rest, nothing can prevent my looking upon it as a fatal omen.'

The fourth taper went out.

The Queen's last days at the palace of Versailles, where she had enjoyed all the happiness of youth, were one long agony of terror and bitter grief, a long battling of pride with necessity, of courage with weakness, of rage with impotence. From near and far there came to Versailles the echoes of revolt, the murmurous echoes of that oath in the Tennis Court when the Third Estate refused to obey the King's order to separate and constituted themselves a permanent assembly, the thunderous echoes of that day of insurrection when the Bastille was stormed and taken. Then came the tramp of troops and the rattle of guns with a message of hope to the Queen's heart as the foreign regiments in the pay of France surrounded the Assembly. The insolence of a people might now be punished! So thought the Queen,

and she urged her timid and benevolent husband to crush the dragon of revolution before it had yet uncoiled itself over the whole kingdom. But the King was divided in a hopelessly perplexed way between the counsels of the liberal nobles and the hard-and-fast Royalists. In his heart we may believe that he was a liberal himself. He desired the welfare of his people, and he hated bloodshed. So Marie Antoinette heard the tramp of troops and the rattle of guns retreating from Versailles, from which they had been ordered away by the King himself, and as the sounds grew fainter the Queen's heart sank within her, and she knew herself to be utterly powerless, except for woman's wit and what courage she could summon for endurance. She was abandoned. The King had listened to those whom she believed to be his enemies, and had thrown himself upon the protection of the National Assembly, whom she believed to be a gathering of traitors. 'It is my wish,' he said, standing uncovered before them, 'that I and the nation should be one, and, in full reliance on the affection and fidelity of my subjects, I have given orders to the troops to remove from Paris and Versailles.' She was, indeed, abandoned. For the departure of the troops, who had seemed the only safeguard of the old *régime*, had been the signal for the emigration of all her friends. They were fleeing from the Court like rats who scuttle from a sinking ship. The whole family of the Polignacs, upon whom she had lavished all her favours and all the perquisites of privilege, escaped in a body. The duchess, her most intimate and her dearest friend, had fled at midnight disguised as a serving-woman. It was a heavy blow. The Queen, pale and almost swooning, had, before she left, said good-bye to her. 'Adieu, most affectionate of friends,' she said. 'How terrible the word is! But it is necessary. Adieu! I have only strength to

embrace you.' With the Polignacs, or soon afterwards, went the Abbé de Vermond, so long the Queen's adviser, and the King's brothers, the Comtes d'Artois and de Provence, hated beyond any other men by the French people, and a whole crowd of Royalists who loved their lives more than their King and Queen. Even those who were willing to remain had to be dismissed from their offices, the King desiring to please the Assembly and to set an example of economy by reducing his household to the barest limits of necessity. So soon, the palace of Versailles, once so gay and crowded, was silent and deserted, a place of gloom and tragedy, defended only by the Swiss Guards, the Flanders Regiment, and by a few loyal gentlemen-at-arms. On July 17 the King went to Paris to address the municipality. It was a day of terror in the palace of Versailles, and the Queen, deprived of all her friends, gave herself up to gloomy apprehensions in the loneliness of her apartments. She hardly expected the King to return. She imagined that he had gone to his death, and never guessed that when her lips were moving in prayer for his life Paris was echoing with shouts of '*Vive le Roi!*' as Louis XVI. received the tricolour cockade from Bailly the Mayor and placed it in his hat. He returned happier than he had been for many days. It seemed to him that after all he held the affections of his people. The Queen's emotion was very great as she embraced him again. He kept repeating expressions of pleasure and delight at his reception at the Hôtel de Ville, and his heart overflowed with amiable sentiments. 'Happily no blood has been shed,' he said, 'and I swear that never shall a drop of French blood be shed by my order.' To the Queen that sentiment was not entirely comforting or commendable. Secretly she always believed that a little bloodshed was necessary for the safety of the monarchy. Her poor husband was

very weak, she thought, but she would be loyal to him. Perhaps, after all, his amiability would save him, and perhaps, by his liberality and simplicity, the Revolution might be kept within bounds.

Alas for the King and Queen! In a very few weeks it was clear that the people had not done with violence. The murders of Foulon and Berthier, his son-in-law, showed the temper of the times. Foulon, who had been a government official, was credited with saying that if the people were starving they should eat hay, and Berthier, a former intendant of Paris, was accused of deliberately producing a famine. Both accusations were no doubt false, but such accusations, whether true or false, inflamed the people to madness, and the deaths of those two men were horrible in their details. The heart of Foulon was carried by the women of Paris in a bunch of white carnations, and Berthier was disembowelled. Their death-cries had echoed through France, making some men shudder and others exult, but at Versailles the news struck a chill of horror in the hearts of the King and Queen. The weeks dragged on, and the months, and the violence of the people and of the revolutionary minority in the Assembly increased steadily in proportion as the efforts of the constitutional party seemed superficially successful. Now and again some passing wave of enthusiasm for the persons and office of the King and Queen seemed to be a sign of reassurance, but always after such occasions the hydra-head of revolution was reared with greater menace. Both the King and the Queen were too apt to clutch at any such show of enthusiasm as a plank of safety by which they might save themselves from shipwreck. In September the officers of the Flanders Regiment gave a ball, and the Queen, who was prevailed upon to grace the banquet with her presence, was hailed with shouts of

homage. The men were intoxicated by the glamour of the Queen's beauty, and their excess of enthusiasm for royalty was as indiscreet as it was wild. It was alleged in Paris by the lying tongue of rumour that they had trampled the tricolour cockade under their feet, though the truth seems to have been that some young hot-heads, under the influence of the charming graciousness of the Queen, had turned the cockade round so that the white lining was foremost and thus became the badge of the old *régime*. Marie Antoinette was fain to rejoice that night. '*Vive la Reine!*' shouted again and again, exultantly and triumphantly, was a grateful sound to ears that had craved for these words and so seldom heard them now. It may have seemed to her that with such loyal soldiers she had not so much to fear as she had thought. But when the morrow came and the populace of Paris listened to the denunciations of their leaders, who described the banquet as an orgy, and the enthusiasm as a royalist treason against the nation, she must have realised the cost of indiscretion.

Then came that night of terror and real danger, that night when for a time silence had reigned in the palace of Versailles after hours when the hilarious screams and the ribald songs of market women had resounded in the court-yard and clamoured at the ears of the Queen, when the tramp of wild hordes of savage men had beaten down the grass by the roadside from Paris, when Lafayette and his National Guards had arrived at the tail end of this long procession of dreadful menace, and although dishonourably late upon the scene did seem now some security against the people's violence. Silence had reigned at last in the palace, in whose corridors the noise and tumult of the crowds had echoed; and in the peace of night the King and Queen had gone to bed, in their separate apartments, and all the

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SUPPLICE DE FOULON À LA PLACE DE GRÈVE

le 23 Juillet 1789.

women who were left in the Court had lain down to sleep. Then suddenly into the silence had come sounds of terror, hoarse shouts of rage and wild laughter, groans of dying men, cries of alarm from sentries and guards, the tumult of men's feet rushing down the corridors, the banging of doors, the clatter of swords, and all the din and panic of a night surprise. So Lafayette had failed them! The Queen hurried from her bed, and, hastily wrapped in a skirt, must have called him traitor in her heart. Never again would she trust this general who had no command over his own men. Never again, if ever again she saw another day, when men might be trusted or distrusted. This night, perhaps, would be her last, for death was in those sounds of uproar that came nearer as doors were smashed down and footsteps were close upon her. At least she would die with her husband. So the Queen ran towards the King's apartments, seeking him, as he had already come in search of her, fearing to find only her bleeding body. It was as narrow an escape for her as that of any woman who has jumped from the jaws of death before they snapped. Not many minutes after she had left her bedroom the bed itself was pierced through and through by the swords of men who would have stabbed her with the same ferocity. But, huddled together, the royal family waited in a room of the inner apartments, within the 'Bull's Eye,' as that part of the palace was called, waiting through the frightful hours of night with that wonderful calmness which imminent and deadly danger gives to many people who are not cowards as a kind of narcotic for the nerves. After all, their blood was not to flow on this night, for after the murder of the loyal guards, at the first posts of danger, the other gentlemen-at-arms, with a splendid strategy not less heroic than the unavailing defence of their comrades, had fraternised with the National Guards and

the leaders of the assault, and had obtained a truce by feigning sympathy.

But this was the last night of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette at the palace of Versailles. Never again would they tread those polished floors upon which, as a young married couple, they had stepped out to the measure of a minuet. Never again would they sit in those gilded rooms where often they had laughed with the Polignacs and all the other 'Queen's friends.' The women who had trudged through the mud so many miles were going back to Paris, but they were determined that with them should go back also 'the baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's boy.' They called the Queen to her window, and she came obediently at their command, with her children at her skirts, gazing down at the sea of upturned faces with proud, steady eyes. 'No children!' they screamed at her. One cannot guess the reason of this strange request. To the Queen it seemed as if they wished her death, but it may have been from some hidden instincts of mercy lingering still in such savage creatures that they would save the children. So the royal children were taken away, and the Queen appeared again on the balcony. She believed that from the crowd some shot would find its way to her bosom, and she stood there waiting for the moment of death, her eyes gazing this time not upon the people but into the clear sky, her hands raised also in supplication, not to the people, but to the Spirit of Mercy kinder than men's mercy. A hush fell upon the mob. The Queen was hated in France as 'the Austrian,' and the enemy of liberty. Yet always, even to the very hour of her death, there was something in the presence of the Queen, in her beauty and dignity and courage, that cast a spell upon those who saw her, bewildering them even in spite of their hatred and prejudice. So now no shot sped to her with its message of death, and no

more cruel cry smote the air than the shouts, repeated again and again, of ' To Paris ! To Paris ! '

Nothing but force would have dragged Marie Antoinette to the city, which seemed to her a den of wolves ; nothing but force and the wish of the King. Both these reasons for her going were commanding. Lafayette and his National Guard, and the mob about Versailles, would not return to Paris without the royal family, and Louis was not inclined to refuse. ' If my people want me in Paris,' he said, ' I am ready to go.' We may call him weak, yet there is a strength even in impotent resignation. Louis did not wish to thwart the will of his people, and as now he was ready to obey them, so later he would say, ' If my people desire my death I am ready to die.' It was, after all, an heroic weakness.

The procession to Paris was a road of martyrdom, for the Queen at least, surely for the King also. In the story of the royal family's sufferings it is always Marie Antoinette who draws our sympathy. And no doubt, as a woman with a sensitive temperament and a nervous imagination, her sufferings were most acute. But who shall say that behind that heavy impassive mask of the King there was not a bleeding heart, or that because he ate well and slept well he did not feel the hardship of his lot ? To both of them that journey from Versailles, when their coach was surrounded by terrible women and ferocious men, and when in front of them bobbed up and down two bleeding heads of gentlemen who had been their guards, carried on pikes as trophies of victory, must have been like driving through a nightmare.

Upon arriving at Paris the royal family were conducted to the palace of the Tuileries. No preparations had been made for their coming, and the great rooms, long neglected as a royal residence, were ill furnished and uncomfortable, dust-laden and disordered. Busy little spiders had spun

their webs between the spokes of gilded chairs. Rats and mice had gnawed at the mouldy hangings. The place smelt damp and fusty, like a charnel-house, striking a chill upon the newly arrived occupants. The poor little Dauphin whimpered and complained, but the Queen comforted him. 'My son, what was good enough for Louis XIV. is surely good enough for us.' But though she held her head high, sweeping through the miserable apartments with all her dignity and queenliness of manner, she knew the place to be her prison. To her waiting-woman, Madame Campan, she had wept, in the secrecy of her apartments, before leaving Versailles. Embracing her affectionately she said, 'Come immediately and settle at Paris. I will lodge you at the Tuileries. Come, and do not leave me henceforward. Faithful servants at these times become useful friends. We are lost—dragged away, perhaps to death! When Kings become prisoners they have not long to live.'

That last sentence reveals the Queen's secret convictions in spite of her public show of confidence. She entertained no permanent illusions, such as were a comfort to the King. Now and again her spirits would be lifted for a little while by some sign of the power she possessed in winning over her enemies to temporary friendliness; but when, soon afterwards, some new incident of the people's ferocity blighted her transient hopes, she faced again, sadly but without flinching, the desperate truth of her situation. There were, indeed, many episodes when the personalities of the King and Queen seemed to count for much in influence upon those who came within their reach. Such, for instance, was that dramatic meeting when the very women who had marched upon Versailles came to the Tuileries, invading the Queen's terrace, and demanding to see her. Their spokeswoman, audacious and hostile, rebuked her for being an enemy of the

people, and was applauded by her sisters. But the Queen's answers, mild and reasonable and winning, converted them against themselves, so that in the end they begged her for the flowers and ribbons in her hat, and distributing them, cried again and again, '*Vive Marie Antoinette! Vive la bonne Reine!*' These were moments when the Queen allowed herself a little hope, but they did not last long. Not many weeks after the incident recorded, the execution of de Favras, 'as a sacrifice to public tranquillity,' said his judge, was a warning note to the royal family. It was a mysterious affair, and the mystery of it has never been fully revealed. The man was in the employ of the Comte d'Artois, and was implicated in some counter-revolutionary plot. He was in possession of secrets so dangerous to the royal family that they trembled at the consequence of his arrest. But he died without speaking, abandoned by those who had employed him, but keeping faith and loyalty. That was another shock to the nervous system of the Queen, for people greater than de Favras might be made 'a sacrifice to public tranquillity.'

For a time the clouds seemed to lift when the moderate party in the Assembly succeeded in checking the advanced revolutionists, and when the King accepted their 'Liberal Constitution' this acceptance obtained for the royal family a temporary peace amounting almost to popularity, and they were allowed a considerable measure of liberty, even to the extent of leaving Paris for the summer and retiring to St. Cloud. At the fête of the Champ de Mars an immense concourse of people assembled around the altar of liberty, and their enthusiasm seemed a guarantee that the Revolution had been accomplished at last without the frightful bloodshed that had been anticipated. Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, officiated at the religious ceremony on the steps of the altar

of liberty erected in the square, and although, as he confessed afterwards to his mistress, he had his tongue in his cheek the whole time, and regarded the religious 'business' of the occasion as a huge farce, his mock solemnity was sufficiently impressive. Lafayette was also much *en évidence* this day, and, not having such a blasphemous sense of humour as Talleyrand, may be credited with sincerity. Ascending the steps of the altar, he faced the great multitude, and in a loud, clear voice gave out the oath of loyalty.

'We swear,' he said, 'to be ever faithful to the Nation, the Law, and the King; to maintain with all our power the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King; to protect, conformably with the laws, the safety of person and property, the traffic in grain and other provisions in the interior of the kingdom, the collection of public taxes under whatever forms they exist; and to remain united to all Frenchmen by the indissoluble ties of fraternity.'

A hundred thousand voices took the oath, and the King, rising amidst the great silence that followed, said distinctly and impressively, 'I swear it!' Then the Queen rose and held up the young Dauphin to the crowd. 'Here is my son,' she said. 'He joins, as I do, in the same sentiments.'

Once again, but almost for the last time, Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette were greeted by some shouts of '*Vive le Roi! Vive la Reine!*' But even to-day, in spite of the general enthusiasm, these cries of loyalty to the persons of the monarchy were overwhelmed by the louder and more prolonged cheering of '*Vive la Nation!*'

The acceptance of the liberal Constitution gave but temporary relief to the anxieties of the royal family. The forces of revolutionary violence were stronger than the intellectual liberalism of the constitutional party. In the Assembly the Jacobin element was becoming more noisy

and audacious. The death of Mirabeau removed the one man who stood with any strength between the Crown and the people. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, and above all Marat, were powerful in inciting the people to insurrection against the moderate party. Lafayette, in spite of his system of police espionage and repressive measures against revolutionary journalists and popular orators, was steadily losing his power. The affair at Nancy inflamed the popular imagination with hatred for the authorities on the side of 'reaction,' and the still more disastrous affair of the Champ de Mars, when Bailly and Lafayette's guards fired upon the mob, exasperated the people to the pitch of frenzy.

At the Tuileries the progress of these events destroyed all the hopes that had revived, for a time, after the Constitution had been granted. The crowds of loafers and sightseers who paraded under the windows and followed the King and Queen when they went out walking, under the watchful eyes of the National Guards, became threatening and audacious, and showed the grossest contempt and indecency towards the unhappy prisoners of the palace. Against the Queen especially they levelled their abuse. She dared not go to the windows for fear of seeing some obscenity, and lewd songs were sung so loudly in her neighbourhood that her ears were shocked at them. These Parisians of the Revolution had a lot of vileness in them, not excusable upon principles of liberty.

One great consolation to the Queen was afforded her at this time. It was the return of the Princesse de Lamballe, the dearest friend of her early reign. This lady, who had left the Court to be the companion of her noble old father-in-law, the Duc de Penthièvre, was not like the Duchesse de Polignac, that other friend of the Queen's, who sought her own safety in flight. Her sense of loyalty, her loving friend-

ship, and her fine womanly courage, all urged her to go back to the Tuileries now that Marie Antoinette was in grave peril and abandoned by almost all her former companions. The Queen herself entreated her not to return, and there is something very touching in the correspondence between these two women, the one refusing the consolation she craved for, the other begging for permission to share great perils and hardships. It was, indeed, the very noblest quality of the Queen that she was eager to suffer alone, eager beyond words not to allow her friends to be endangered by any feeling of loyalty.

Two letters written by the Queen, before the Princess came to her at last, in spite of her entreaties, are especially interesting and moving.

'I cannot resist the wish,' she writes, 'to take advantage of the occasion which presents itself to write a word to you, my dear heart. Present circumstances occupy my mind too much for me not to have been greatly touched by your letter and your tender friendship. You belong to those hearts which never change, and which misfortunes make still more affectionate. Be well assured, my dear Lamballe, that my friendship for you is unalterable, and that I can never change. I do not speak to you about affairs here; you know all that is taking place. It is impossible to go out without being insulted a dozen times an hour; accordingly I no longer do so; and sometimes I remain in my room for days without thinking of changing. Adieu, my tender friend. I embrace you with my whole soul. Write to me by safe means.

'MARIE ANTOINETTE.'

In a second letter the Queen writes:

'I am happy, my dear Lamballe, to know that you are in safety in this terrible state of our affairs. Do not come back; I know well that your heart is faithful, and I do not wish you to return. I bring to you every misfortune. It is essential to my tranquillity that my friends should not compromise themselves, for it would be ruining themselves without being useful to me. Do not add to my personal anxieties anxiety for those whom I love. The King's brothers are unfortunately surrounded by ambitious and blundering people who can only ruin us after having ruined themselves, for they will not listen to those who have our confidence, under the pretext that they have not theirs; and the armed emigrants are what is saddest at this moment. I confess that, despite my courage, I should be happy to die if I had not my poor children and husband, who, in the midst of all, preserves a remarkable equanimity. Around us there is nothing but knavery, cunning, and lying. I foresee the entire breaking up of France. I weep over my family and my friends, but not over myself. There is continually some disturbance in the city, but yet the *good* people do us justice. However, they are quiet, bow their heads, and do not know how to make themselves reckoned with. The scoundrels are strong owing to this weakness. Ah! if it were understood how we love the people, how they would blush for the evils they make us suffer. But it will not be possible to get any party from good resolutions. Adieu, my dear heart; love me as I love you.

'MARIE ANTOINETTE.'

Such a letter as that, in spite of its words 'Do not come back,' 'I do not wish you to return,' could only have one effect on the mind of a woman like the Princesse de Lamballe. She determined to share the Queen's misfortunes. The

Duc de Penthièvre, though he was an old and feeble man and leaned for support upon the beautiful woman who had been almost more than a daughter to him, did not hold her back. He was one of the few men in France who combined a great love for the people with an old-fashioned reverence for the traditions of his caste. But when all orders and insignia were abolished after the proclamation of the Constitution, it was with a smile that he divested himself of his decorations. 'I abandon all these things without regret,' he said. 'They flattered me when I was young, I accustomed myself to them, and thought no more about them. If their abolition can render France happy, God be praised!'

So now the old duke made a greater sacrifice and gave up his daughter-in-law, so that she might devote herself to the Queen. When the Princesse de Lamballe entered the Tuileries, Marie Antoinette flung herself, weeping, into the arms of her friend. They were tears of joy as well as of sorrow, joy at seeing this faithful friend again, sorrow at the tragic circumstances into which she had come.

The Princesse de Lamballe established herself at the Tuileries, and, in order to divert the Queen from the gloominess of her thoughts and the dreary monotony of her life, gave many quiet balls and receptions, which were attended by all the Royalists still left in Paris. The Queen often went to these gatherings, but finding that even here she could not escape from the society of people she distrusted, and that her presence was another opportunity for the misrepresentation of her enemies, she withdrew herself altogether from social life, resigning herself to the seclusion of her own palace. The Princesse de Lamballe was constantly with her, however, and occasionally they both went, in a private way, to the salon of the Duchesse d'Orléans, the sister of the Princesse, while 'Philippe Égalité' was away in England.

The Queen was comforted not a little at this time by the presence of another friend, not less faithful and courageous than the Princesse de Lamballe. This was Count Axel Fersen, a Swedish soldier of fortune who, in the early days at Versailles, had been called by rumour 'the Queen's lover.' That there was anything immoral in the relations between Marie Antoinette and this handsome and chivalrous man may not be thought by any decent mind. But it may not be doubted that there was a great tenderness in the Queen's heart for the man who became her champion and her knight-errant through the Courts of Europe, and that he was inspired with a generous and loving devotion for the beautiful and unhappy lady. In this way he was, indeed, 'the Queen's lover,' and he dared death gallantly for her sake. He came in disguise to Paris, but succeeded in obtaining many secret interviews with both the King and Queen, bringing with him messages of good hope from his master, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, who had a great sympathy for the unfortunate and perilous situation of the royal family of France. Count Fersen's great desire was to induce Louis XVI. and his consort to escape across the frontiers, while there was yet time, and he was continually plotting to effect this plan. Louis XVI. was exceedingly adverse to the proposal, and the Queen herself was doubtful as to the wisdom of it. But they consented at last to leave Paris and go once again to St. Cloud, from which place Count Fersen thought it easy for them to get away in safety if they could be induced to do so. But their departure from the Tuileries was not to be accomplished so easily as they had imagined. Marat, in 'The People's Friend,' had been warning the people against the royal family's attempt at escape, and urging them to keep a sharp look-out. Count Fersen himself gives a vivid

account of the dramatic incidents of the morning for which the departure had been fixed.

'At half-past eleven the King went to Mass, M. Bailly [the Mayor] having previously come to warn him that his departure for St. Cloud would occasion a disturbance, and that the people seemed inclined to oppose it. The King replied that, liberty having been decreed to every man to go and come as he pleased, it would be very extraordinary if he were the only one who could not go two leagues to get fresh air; and that he was quite determined to go. He came down with the Queen, Madame Elisabeth, the children, and Madame de Tourzel [their governess], and as the carriages had not been able to enter the Cour des Princes he turned to go and meet them in the Carrousel. On being told that the crowd was enormous, he stopped in the middle of the Cour des Princes, and the Queen proposed to him to get into a carriage which was in the court, although it was only a berline. They all six got into it, but when the carriage reached the gate the National Guard refused to open it and let the King pass. In vain M. de Lafayette talked to them, declaring that none but enemies of the Constitution would behave in that way, and that by thwarting the King's will they gave him the air of being a prisoner, and defeated the decrees which he had sanctioned. They answered only by invectives and assurances that they would not let the King pass out. They used the most insulting terms, called the King a —— aristocrat, a fat pig, incapable of reigning; that he ought to be deposed and the Duc d'Orléans put in his place; that he was only a public functionary to whom they paid 25,000,000 francs, which was a great deal too much, and he would have to do as they chose. The same talk went on among the people. M. de Lafayette called upon the mayor to proclaim martial law, and display the red flag,

but he refused. Detachments of grenadiers, as they arrived, swore that the King should not leave Paris; several showed ball-cartridges, saying that they would put them into their muskets and fire upon the King if he made the slightest motion to go. All the people of the household who approached the carriage were insulted. . . . M. de Gougenot, the steward, having gone to the Queen's side to take her orders about the dinner, was dragged away and came near being hanged. The Queen leaned forward to tell them to let him be, as he was in the King's service, on which they told her they had no orders to receive from her. Others said: "There's a pretty b—— who thinks she can give us orders!" M. de Lafayette asked the King whether he wished him to force a passage and make the law respected. The soldiers cried out that he had no power to do it, for they had all drawn their bayonets and would never serve against brave citizens. The King refused to employ force, and said: "I will have no blood shed for me; when I am gone you will be master to employ all the means you please to make the laws respected."

'Some of the grenadiers, who were near the carriage, wept; a few advanced and said to the King: "Sire, you are loved; you are adored by your people; but do not go; your life would be in danger; you are ill advised, you are misled! The people want you to send away the priests; they are afraid of losing you." The King silenced them, saying it was they who were misled, and that no one ought to doubt his intentions or his love for his people. At last, after two hours and a quarter of vain attempts and useless efforts on the part of M. de Lafayette, the King ordered the carriage to be turned round. On getting out of it the soldiers pressed in crowds around them. Some said: "We will defend you." The Queen answered, looking proudly at them, "Yes, we

count on that, but you must allow that at present we are not free." As they pressed closely, and entered the vestibule in crowds, the Queen took the Dauphin in her arms, Madame Elisabeth took Madame Royale, and they hurried them in as best they could. The King then slackened his pace, and when the Queen and Madame Elisabeth had reached the Queen's room and entered, he turned round and said: " Halt, grenadiers ! " They all stopped as if their legs had been cut off.'

This disaster and humiliation to the King and Queen convinced them, more than all Count Fersen's previous arguments, that if they were to escape death they must fly from France. The Count himself now renewed his efforts, more persistently than before, to this end, and bold as he was it must be admitted that he had the coolness and shrewdness of the adventurer as well as the rashness and the courage. During the weeks of plotting and planning, this handsome and gallant man, whose face looks out from contemporary portraits with a winning and delicate refinement, with frank and simple eyes and a finely sensitive mouth, so that he seems the very type of the *preux chevalier*, *sans peur et sans reproche*, put his life to the hazard, and risked death as every minute passed. He was bound to trust the fidelity of people whom he little knew, and who were certainly surrounded by spies and enemies. He put his life into the hands of chambermaids and waiting-women, of grooms and men-at-arms. For his accomplice he had a man named Goguelat, a surveyor and engineer, who had obtained the confidence of the King and Queen by a rashness of enthusiasm which had really done them a good deal of harm. But they looked upon him as a bold man, who at least could be trusted for a dangerous task, and it was for this reason that he was chosen as the intermediary between Count Fersen and the

Queen when the escape was planned. The thread of the plot was as follows: the royal family were to leave the Tuileries at midnight in a carriage brought secretly into the courtyard of the Tuileries by Count Fersen. The Count himself, disguised as a postilion, was to drive them as far as the first stage, where Goguelat was to meet them with forty trusted hussars. Count Fersen would then take a different direction, and the fugitives were to drive on rapidly to Varennes, there to await General Bouillé, who would advance to their support with a considerable force. It was expected that all would be easy if once the royal family could get clear of the Tuileries, without arousing the suspicions of the spies in the household or of Lafayette's Guards. Elaborate precautions were taken to ensure that every link in the chain should be secure. Count Fersen had been in correspondence with Bouillé, and had superintended all arrangements. Goguelat himself had driven in a postchaise along the route of escape to calculate the time from stage to stage. It was not realised, until afterwards, that all his calculations were erroneous, because a light postchaise travels at a very different speed from a heavy and lumbering old coach. During the few days in which the last instructions were given and received, Count Fersen was in a state of tense anxiety. A waiting-woman in the Queen's service was suspected of treachery, so that new arrangements had to be made at the eleventh hour. The King had to be coaxed and bullied from a hopeless state of indecision. The Queen's womanly anxiety for an adequate wardrobe had to be attended to; a thousand small obstacles, each one of which might have been a grit of dust in the wheels of this great adventure, had to be removed with infinite care. But Count Fersen was cool and indefatigable. Not a point of detail escaped him, and he was hawk-eyed in vigilance. In his journal, which still

exists, we may see his hurried scribblings in which he records the result of each day's work. Their terseness and baldness are more eloquent and of more breathless interest than any lengthy narration. The following extracts tell the story of the adventure, in the words of the man who was the leading spirit of it:

June 11th, 1791, *Saturday*.—Lafayette wanted to double the sentinels and look over all the carriages of the palace. [It is evident that the rumour of the plot has already got abroad.]

12th, *Sunday*.—Journey put off till 20th because of chambermaid.

13th, *Monday*.—They say the guard is to be doubled and all the King's carriages watched.

16th, *Thursday*.—Went to the Queen at 9.30. Carried all the luggage myself. Nothing suspected; nor in the city.

17th, *Friday*.—Went to Bondy and Bourget [stages on the journey]. Dined at home.

18th, *Saturday*.—With the Queen from half-past two till six. Good letter from the Emperor [of Austria]. They say the English fleet has sailed.

19th, *Sunday*.—With the King. Took charge of 800 francs and the Seals. Remained at the palace till midnight.

20th, *Monday* [written in pencil on detached pieces of paper and half missing, but relating final interview with the King and Queen] . . . remark, and asked what he wished to do. Both answered me that there was no hesitation; they must go on.

'We agreed as to hours, &c., &c. If they were stopped I must go to Brussels and act for them, &c. On leaving me the King said: 'M. de Fersen, whatever may happen to me, I shall never forget what you have done for me.' The Queen wept much. At six o'clock I left her; she went with

Prieur inv & del

ARRESTATION DE LOUIS SEIZE À VARENNES

le 22 Juin. 1791

the children to the gardens. No unusual precautions. I home to finish my affairs. At seven to Sullivan's to see if the carriage had come. Went home. At eight wrote to the Queen to change the rendezvous of the maids and instruct them carefully to let me know the exact hour by the bodyguard. Carried the letter; no excitement. At 8.34 the guards joined me and gave me the letter for Mercy. I instructed them; went home; sent on my own carriage; gave them my coachman and horses to start with. Went to fetch the carriage. Thought I had dropped the letter for Mercy. At 10.15 in the Cour des Princes. At 11.15 the children came out, brought without difficulty; Lafayette passed twice. At 11.45 Madame Elisabeth, then the King, then the Queen. At midnight started, joined the carriage at the Barrière St. Martin. At half-past one reached Bondy; there they took the post-road, I the cross-roads to Bourget.'

The story of the adventure has been too often told to be repeated here in detail. In an adventure of this kind there is generally one fool who frustrates all the efforts of wiser brains. Goguelat was the fool. His miscalculation of time was fatal, and he failed to get a message through in time to the General, who was to have advanced to the support of the royal family. When the carriage was stopped by the mob at Varennes Goguelat lost his nerve and, instead of ordering his forty hussars to cut their way through, asked them whether they were for the King or nation, thus surrendering his authority. Poor Louis himself was in the same condition of timidity and hesitation. 'Will it be hot work?' he asked, and Goguelat answered, 'Very hot.' The answer was sufficient to arouse the King's instinctive horror of bloodshed, and he finally decided to submit to the people and return to Paris. It was a melancholy journey back. Certainly the Queen knew that they were going back to death.

Pétion, the future Mayor of Paris, and Barnave, one of the leaders of the Assembly, had been sent off, post-haste, to bring back the fugitives, and the former did not scruple to treat the royal prisoners with a gross familiarity and contempt. Barnave, on the contrary, ardent revolutionist as he had been, was captivated by the dignity and courage of the Queen, and his chivalrous courtesy somewhat alleviated the royal family's sense of ignominy at their situation. From that day Barnave, whose heart seems to have been bigger than his head, gradually abandoned his revolutionary principles and repented heartily of his former democratic enthusiasm. It was not a cowardly repentance, for in acting as an adviser and sympathiser of the King and Queen he knew that he was walking straight into the jaws of death.

In the midst of the jeers and insults of the mob who surrounded the coach, as it was taken back to the Tuileries, the King showed an impassive face and a remarkable *sang-froid*. But his appearance and his appetite were against him. Marat, in 'The People's Friend,' scoffed at the monarch who showed so little shame for his ignominious position, and whose first words were a demand for food. But the Queen silenced the jeers of her bitterest enemies. Her proud face, held high, as she swept with superb dignity into the palace, which was now a prison, was so beautiful in its scorn and in its sorrow that it hushed down the low insults of those about her.

Her faithful waiting-woman, Madame Campan, relates how the first time she saw the Queen, after the disaster at Varennes, she found her getting out of bed. 'Her features were not very much altered, but after the first kind words she uttered she took off her cap and desired me to observe the effect which grief had produced upon her hair. It became, in one single night, as white as that of a woman

at seventy. . . . Her Majesty showed me a ring she had just had mounted for the Princesse de Lamballe. It contained a lock of her whitened hair, with the inscription "Bleached with sorrow."'

There was no attempt now to conceal the silent watch kept upon the King and Queen. The Legislative Assembly and the Municipality were determined that there should be no second escape. Guards were placed in the corridors and at the doors of the royal apartments, with orders never to take their eyes off the royal family, waking or sleeping. When the King shut his door the guards opened it again. Even when the Queen was in bed an officer sat outside the room, only allowing the door to be shut while she dressed or undressed. The bed of her waiting-woman was the only thing that screened her from this shameful vigilance.

Count Fersen, who had learnt the news of her capture with despair, did not abandon her to her fate. He had managed to escape over the frontier, and was now busily plotting in the Courts of Europe to effect a combination of foreign Powers for the rescue of the French monarchy. By clever stratagem he succeeded in communicating regularly with Marie Antoinette, and in arranging secret means by which the Queen should keep him posted as to the course of events in Paris. It was a dangerous game—terribly dangerous to the Queen herself, and one cannot help thinking that, in spite of Count Axel Fersen's chivalry and devotion, he was the Queen's worst enemy. Careful though they were, it is now known that some of the messages that passed between them were intercepted and deciphered by revolutionary spies, and this revelation of the Queen's correspondence with the *émigrés* and with hostile Powers was the most damning indictment against her. A hundred different methods were used for this correspondence, ingenious enough

in their way, but not always successful. 'Whenever you receive blank paper or a book with blank leaves or engravings,' writes the Count to the Queen, 'it will be written upon in white ink. When the date is at the bottom of letters, the same.' This white ink only became visible when the paper was heated, but it was a trick too well known to baffle the suspicions of their enemies. In letters of the Queen we learn some of the other plans adopted for secret correspondence. 'The idea of the chocolate is excellent,' she writes on one occasion. 'It is doubly useful to you and I shall use it with prudence, but some time this winter.' We may guess that packets of chocolate were used as a covering for notes written on tissue paper which could be enclosed in the sweets. But another time the Queen writes, 'I have just received your letter enclosed in an image.' Sometimes books were sent to mutual friends with letters secretly marked so that they might be used as a cipher. 'Paul and Virginia' was the favourite volume for this purpose. The margins of newspapers and the blank spaces on newspaper wrappers, the lining of hats or of articles of clothing, were also made use of, and as an extra precaution each letter sent was numbered, so that it would be known if any went astray. From Count Fersen's private papers we find that some of these letters did go astray, and there can be but little doubt that they fell into hostile hands. Reading these letters now —and one cannot do so without keen and thrilling interest—it is impossible to believe that the Queen and her knight-errant were allied by any more intimate sympathies than gratitude and gracious friendship on the one side, and by the most loyal and high-minded devotion on the other. The Count's letters are business-like accounts of his negotiations with the King of Sweden and the Emperor of Austria for the purpose of concentrating the armies of the Powers along

the frontiers of France, together with good counsel for the behaviour of the King and Queen, and words of caution as to the use of the secret ciphers. The Queen's letters are equally free from any intimate revelation, and as a rule she uses her opportunity of correspondence for the sole purpose of keeping her friend informed as to the state of affairs in France. Now and again she gives just a glimpse of her sad anguish of heart, such as one may read in the following passage. 'As for me,' she wrote on one occasion, 'I keep up better than I could expect under the immense fatigue of mind I have incessantly, and seldom going out of doors. I have not a moment to myself, what with persons I must see, and the writings, and the time I am with my children. That last occupation, which is not the least, is my only happiness. When I am very sad I take my little boy in my arms, and kiss him with all my heart, and it comforts me for the moment.'

After the flight to Varennes and the arrest of the royal family, Count Axel Fersen, whose part in the affair had been discovered, was proscribed in France and a price was put upon his head. His capture would have meant certain death, but he had no fear of death when the Queen's safety was at stake, and in February of 1792 this much daring man came in disguise to Paris and sought an interview with the King and Queen. He came with letters and messages from Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. That crowned adventurer was in ardent sympathy with the unfortunate sovereigns of France, and he was formulating a scheme for a sudden and swift descent upon the coast of Normandy, from which he would march with a formidable force to Paris, to the rescue of the monarchy. It was a bold plan, and a generous one, but if it had ever taken place we may scarcely doubt of its failure. The people of France would have risen

to a man to crush the invading army, and the execution of Louis XVI. and his consort would not have been delayed. With the papers in which this scheme was outlined Count Fersen succeeded in entering the Tuileries in disguise, and had a long interview with the royal prisoners. One may imagine the emotion that must have animated the hearts of those three people at this dangerous and dramatic interview. The Count, having delivered his documents and explained the King of Sweden's scheme in detail, also discussed the question of another escape. But the King decided against it, and the Queen did not try to persuade her husband against his convictions. So Count Fersen bent over the hand of Marie Antoinette and kissed it for the last time. Then he left as secretly as he had come, and escaped once more over the frontiers, finding his way in safety to Brussels. In the following month—that is, in March of 1792—all his plans were frustrated by the hand of fate. The death of the Emperor Leopold of Austria took place on the second of that month, and on the 16th Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was mortally wounded by an ex-captain of his guard. There was now no hope of foreign intercession, and Marie Antoinette saw the shadows of her doom closing around her.

In June a horde of savage men and women invaded the Tuileries and burst into the royal apartments. They were inflamed to madness by the King's veto of the decree for the deportation of priests. It was the Queen who had insisted upon this veto, and the King had yielded to her imperious will, though he would have preferred not to use the right of veto, which had been granted to him by the Constitution, against the democratic prejudices of the nation. The mob were threatening and murderous. They shouted 'Down with the veto!' in the King's presence, and used violence against the guards who formed a barrier between

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AFFAIRE DES POIGNARDS DANS L'INTÉRIEUR DU CHÂTEAU DES TUILERIES

le 28 Fevrier. 1791

them and the monarch. Louis XVI. had been placed in a window-recess, with benches before him, and some loyal grenadiers, who surrounded him, called out, 'Fear nothing, sire.' It was then that the King made his famous answer: 'Put your hand upon my heart, and you will perceive whether I am afraid or not.' Once again Louis XVI. showed that with all his weakness he had a strain of heroism in his nature. This time the danger passed. There had been murder in the hearts of the mob, but Santerre, their leader, was not so barbarous as his followers or as his reputation, and he led them off quietly. They filed through the council chamber, where the Queen, with Madame Elisabeth, the Princesse de Lamballe, Madame de Tourzel and other ladies, sat with a calm demeanour awaiting death, but prepared to die with dignity. They had donned the tricolour cockade, and the poor little Dauphin was half smothered in the red cap of 'liberty' which had been thrust upon him by one of the National Guard. With leering eyes and bold brazen words, the women of the markets passed by them, exhibiting toy guillotines, and bullock's hearts with the legend, 'Heart of Louis XVI.,' and other obscene symbols, followed by the ruffians of the Faubourgs. Some of the women stopped to bandy words with the Queen, calling her 'Austrian,' and names of a grosser kind. Marie Antoinette's beautiful dignity never deserted her for a moment, and her replies were mild and sorrowful, so that some at least of the women who had begun by cursing her wept when they left her presence. It was a wild hysteria that had taken possession of Paris, and emotions of hatred and pity, of fury and enthusiasm, would rise and follow each other swiftly, at a chance word or subtle thrill, in the same hearts. So this time the danger passed, and although the doors of the Tuileries had been smashed no other damage had been done. But the

King and Queen, and the few friends who still surrounded them, believed that this was but the prelude to another attack upon the palace. Between the months of June and August the temper of the people grew more and more threatening. Marat, in his journal, was rising to greater heights of violence. Desmoulins and Danton were inciting the people to desperate measures. Anarchy was surging in a great tide over the whole nation, engulfing all order and authority in its waves of human passion. It was not long before the royal family and the household of the Tuileries found their worst fears realised. There came the fatal night of August 10, and the tumult of the tocsin calling the people to arms. To the Queen's listening ears there came the sound of a gun. 'It will not be the last,' she said. Then the heavy tramp of feet shook the very foundations of the palace, and hoarse shouts from thousands of throats dashed in billows of dreadful sound against the palace walls. The Queen again believed that death was at hand. Surely it could no longer be postponed! We may believe that she almost craved for that final blow when at her husband's side, and with her few faithful friends around her, she should find the end of her tragedy. By her husband's side, that was now her one wish, and quietly she went to him with her ladies and children. As the mob were storming at the gates the royal family, with the officers and ladies of the household, stood waiting in one room. There seemed nothing to do but wait for the inevitable moment when the leaders of the hordes without should burst in with drawn swords and murderous pikes. But at last it was suggested that the royal family should seek safety in the Assembly, claiming the protection of the men who at least pretended to be representatives of law, liberty, and justice.

When at last the people stormed into the palace, neither

they who ravaged through the long passages and the great halls with instruments of death, nor the eight hundred Swiss Guards who defended their posts with the greatest loyalty and heroism, knew that the royal family were not in the building. The massacre of those faithful guards was unnecessary on both sides, and it would have been better if, before leaving, the King had sent word to them to surrender at discretion. But in the excitement and danger of the moment this message was forgotten, and the Swiss soldiers fought until they fell.

The royal family had escaped death, but it was only a postponement. The Assembly, now dominated by the Jacobins, protected, or rather imprisoned, the fugitives in the cells of the old monastery of the Feuillans, and afterwards transferred them to the Temple. The Queen's ladies, including the Princesse de Lamballe, Madame de Tourzel (the governess of the royal children) and her daughter, as well as two of the waiting-women, were conveyed a few days later to the prison of La Force. This prison was already crowded with unfortunate men and women suspected of 'counter-revolutionary' principles, but as the Duc d'Orléans is said to have remarked, with brutal jocularity, 'there is always room for ladies among so gallant a nation as the French.'

The Jacobins had now triumphed after the popular victory of the 10th of August, and they were strong enough to throw off their mask of submission to the principles of the Constitution. They were now to fight their deadly duel with the Girondins and the men of moderate views, and the sign of their victory would be the execution of the King and Queen and of all avowed Royalists, preparatory to establishing the Republic.

The King and the Queen, with the royal children, were

now isolated from the outside world. No longer could Marie Antoinette smuggle cipher messages in bonnet-boxes or chocolates to men like Fersen, who were still eager to risk their lives for her. She was alone, save for her husband and children, and there was nothing to do but to work, and weep, and pray, while waiting for the inevitable hour of death that could not be long in coming. Madame Elisabeth's story of these last days in the Temple is a simple narrative of tragedy. The details of it burn themselves into one's imagination, and in the mind's eye one may see the picture of those royal prisoners as they passed the dreary days, the Queen with her blanched head and sorrowfully beautiful face bent over a piece of needlework, the tears falling sometimes upon the thin white fingers that went stitching as though a seamstress were working for the bread of life; the King reading aloud to the grave-eyed little Dauphin, as calmly as though he were some fatherly old *bourgeois* reading by his fireside, or dozing peacefully on the plain couch, while the Queen and the little family sat silent and motionless for fear of waking him. The gaolers were uncouth and grim; the national deputies who visited the prison from time to time were cruel in their ill-mannered roughness, and there was a lack even of ordinary comfort for this royal family who had been used to every luxury. Yet nothing could disturb the marvellous serenity of the King, and Marie Antoinette, though suffering acutely, never lost her pride or dignity.

At the prison of La Force the Princesse de Lamballe was now paying the price for the gallant and loyal devotion which had prompted her to share the Queen's hardships and dangers. Madame de Tourzel, who with her daughter shared the room in which the Princess was confined, has given in her memoirs a vivid little picture of their life in

prison. 'We tried,' she says, 'to render our position during this miserable sojourn less painful by dividing our time with various occupations, such as looking after our room, needlework, and reading. Our thoughts were ever turning towards the Temple, and we sometimes gave ourselves up to the hope that the foreigner would terrify our persecutors; that they would take the King as an arbitrator, and that we should leave this prison safe and sound, to find ourselves again with the royal family. Madame la Princesse de Lamballe was perfect in her sad position. Gentle, good, and obliging, she used to render us all the little services which were in her power. Pauline and myself were constantly occupied with her, and we had at least the consolation in our misfortune of having but one mind and heart. . . . By a curious chance, the Princess's health had improved in this sad dwelling-place. She had no more nervous attacks, and she admitted that she had not been so well for a long time.'

One morning some armed men entered the room, without ceremony, while the ladies were in bed and demanded their names. Upon being informed they withdrew as abruptly as they had come, not thinking it necessary to explain the reason of their visit. It was an ominous sign.

'This day threatens to be a very terrible one, dear Princess,' said Madame de Tourzel. 'We do not know what Heaven intends for us. We must ask God to pardon our faults. Let us say the *Miserere* and *Confiteor* as acts of contrition, and recommend ourselves to His goodness.'

Later in the day another party of armed men entered, and their spokesman ordered the Princess to accompany them. She was taken to the office of La Force, where a crowd of aristocratic ladies were being examined by the public prosecutor. The Princesse de Lamballe had to wait her turn, and was then subjected to the usual inquiries as to her

name, age, and former quality. She answered quietly, with a graciousness that might have softened the gruffness of her accusers. It seems, indeed, as if they were willing to let her live on condition that she foreswore her loyalty to the monarchy.

'Swear liberty and equality, and hatred to the King and Queen and royalty.'

The Princess, who was herself of royal birth, answered with a quiet courage :

'I will swear the first two without difficulty. The last I cannot swear ; it is not in my heart.'

An ominous silence followed these words, in the midst of which a hoarse voice at her side whispered : 'Swear, or you are a dead woman ! '

The Princess spoke again, a little dreamily, as if she had slipped already from the coil of the flesh :

'I have nothing to answer. To die a little sooner or later is indifferent to me. I have made the sacrifice of my life.'

Again there was a moment's silence, save for a low murmur of pity from the ladies around her. Then the harsh voice of the President said grimly :

'Madame is at liberty.'

It was the formula addressed to those condemned to die.

As she left the bureau to be taken again to La Force a crowd of ruffians pressed around her like wolves snarling about a lamb before devouring it. The Princess passed in front of them with her head held high, and with that dreamy, far-off look upon her face as though she walked as a spirit in the midst of the gross human clay of these violent men. Suddenly their hands were upon her, tearing at her with a frenzy of blood-fever. Then she was struck down by

the swift flash of a knife, and in a moment her head was cut off with one brutal sweep of the sharp steel. The corpse was left where it fell, but the head was lifted high by bloody hands and carried by the mob of savages into the streets. They played with it in a horrible spirit of mad merriment. It is related in contemporary memoirs, though it seems too horrible even for Frenchmen in revolution, that a barber was summoned to his shop to wash and powder the bloody locks of the beautiful head, and that when he had done his work he fell dead from the shock of horror. This at least is certain, that the poor head, stuck upon a pike, was carried by a mob of shouting devils towards the Temple, so that the Queen might see the dead face of the woman she had loved, and read her own fate in this symbol of revenge.

The tumultuous roar of the approaching crowd alarmed the Queen as she sat stitching in the Temple. 'What is it?' she asked, wondering, perhaps, whether the people had come to tear her to pieces. A young municipal officer on guard at the time had gone to the window and gazed down upon the hideous spectacle. For a time he would not answer the Queen's inquiries, and kept her back from the window.

'What is it?' said the Queen. 'Tell me what it is.'

The young officer answered at last.

'Well, since you must know,' he said, abruptly, 'it is the head of Madame de Lamballe, which they wish to show you.'

Then, for the first time during the whole period of her troubles, Marie Antoinette lost her self-control, and at the vision of the beautiful dead face of the woman who had been her dearest friend she gave a cry and fell into a swoon.

The death of the Princesse de Lamballe and the September massacres established the Reign of Terror in which the people and their leaders, the Jacobins, triumphed over

the principles and party of moderation. The death of the King and the proclamation of a Republic were now fully determined as the policy of the advanced revolutionists. By January of 1793 the Girondins were cowed into voting for the trial of the King, and even Louis, optimistic as he had been during the most tragic episodes of the Revolution, knew now that his head must fall. A brave and distinguished lawyer, named Tronchet, undertook the perilous task of defending the King, but finding that the mass of documents upon which the charges were based could not be sifted without assistance, the noble and eloquent Malesherbes was called in at the eleventh hour. The old man responded to the appeal for his services with admirable courage, and in accepting the responsibility offered himself as a sacrifice to the principle of justice. Together the two counsel for defence worked night and day preparing their case. Louis helped them to the fullest extent with as much quietude of mind as if he were not himself concerned in the business. As far as his personal inclinations went he would have preferred to make no defence at all, refusing, like Charles I., to recognise the authority of a popular tribunal to try their King. The letter to Malesherbes in which he expresses these views is admirable in its dignity and restraint:

'I am unable to express to you, my dear Malesherbes,' he wrote, 'how deeply sensible I am of your sublime devotion. You have done more than I could have wished; your venerable hand has been put forth to save me from the scaffold, and if my throne were still left me, it would be my duty to share it with you in order that I might be worthy of the remainder. But I have only these chains, the weight of which you have helped to lessen. I trust that Heaven and your own conscience may bring you your reward.

'I entertain no false hopes respecting my fate. Those

who are ungrateful enough to have dethroned me will not stop in the middle of their work. It would be too irksome for them to see their victims continually before them. I shall share the fate of Charles I., and my blood will flow to punish me for not having shed that of others. But would it not be possible for me to lay down my life with dignity? The National Assembly contains the destroyers of my monarchy, my accusers, my judges, and probably my executioners. Such men are impervious to arguments; justice is not in them, and to move their hearts is still more hopeless. Would it not be better to take up a bold attitude, since the weakness of my defence cannot save me? I suggest an address, not to the Convention, but to the whole of France, which would judge my judges and give me back that place in the heart of my people which I never deserved to lose. In that case I should merely refuse to recognise the jurisdiction of that tribunal before which I was forced to appear. I should preserve a dignified silence, and in condemning me the men who call themselves my judges would be no less than assassins.

'But, my dear Malesherbes, both you and Tronchet, who shares your devotion, are wiser than I. Compare my suggestions with yours. I subscribe blindly to whatever you may do. If you save my life I shall use it only to remind you of what you have done. If it be taken, we shall meet, I trust, in the abode of immortality.'

Malesherbes prepared his final speech to the jury in writing and submitted it to the King. It was profoundly moving in its eloquence, and in its appeals to the emotions of pity and humanity. But with his own hand the King struck out all these most touching passages, preferring, as he explained to Malesherbes, to appeal to the reason and justice of his enemies rather than to their sentiment. It was for this reason that Malesherbes' oration seemed cold

and unimpressive, astonishing those who had expected a passionate outburst of eloquence.

On January 21, 1793, Louis XVI. awoke to the morning of his death. He had been separated from his wife and children, but he was allowed to say farewell to them. They hung about him weeping despairingly, and the Queen was almost swooning as she embraced her husband for the last time. For their sakes, as well as for his own, he withdrew from their entwining arms and retired to say his lonely prayers to God. Outside in the streets snow had fallen, followed by rain, which made slush of it. Through this ice-cold mud fifteen thousand soldiers had tramped with steady footfall, lining the streets four deep from the Temple to the Place de la Révolution, where General Santerre, the former leader of the mob, rode at the head of the third legion. The streets were deserted save for this army of soldiers. Only in the Place de la Révolution a great crowd had gathered round the scaffold. A frightful silence brooded over Paris. The shops were closed, all the busy life of the city was stilled, and the day seemed pregnant with a great tragedy. Presently the rumbling of heavy wheels and the clatter of hoofs and harness awoke the echoes of the streets. It was Santerre who rode with a train of artillery to the Temple. Dismounting, the brewer General, attended by some officers, strode upstairs to the King's apartments. Louis looked up from his book. 'Have you come for me?' he said, simply.

'I have,' said Santerre.

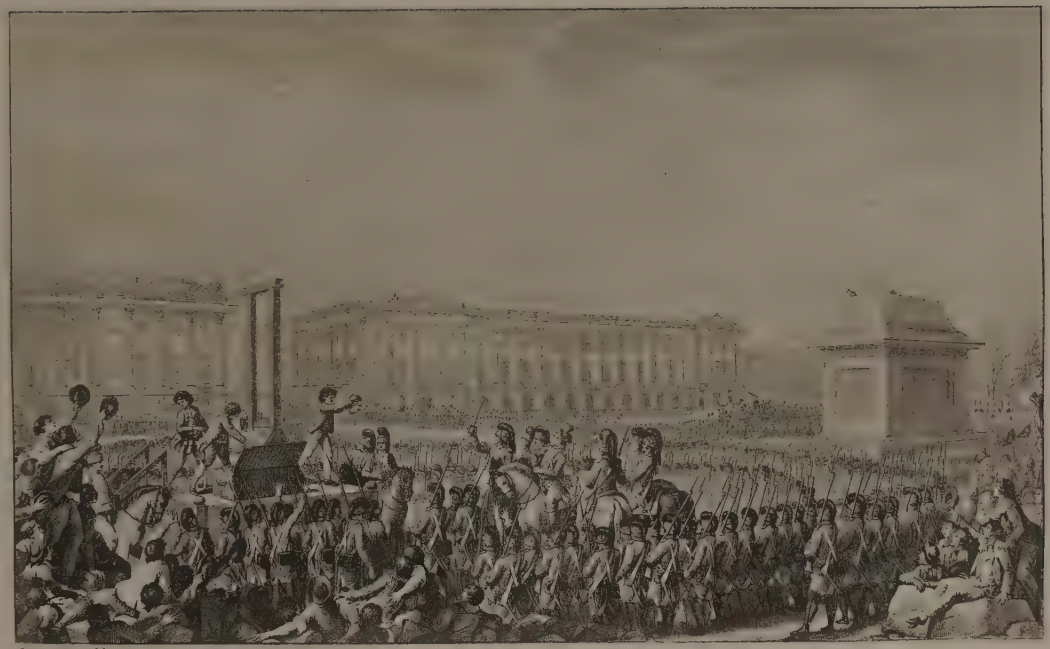
'Very well. I want to be alone with my confessor for a few moments. Then I will be at your disposal.'

He entered the inner room, and remained there for a brief while. Then he came back with a wonderful peace upon his face and handed a New Testament to the revolu-

tionary priest, Jacques Rous, who had been commissioned to attend him. 'I beg you to place this in the hands of the President of the Conseil-Général.' 'It is not my business,' was the answer. The King paused a moment and then answered in a mild tone, 'You are right.' He turned to a man named Boudrois, a commissioner on duty in the Temple, who promised to deliver the book to the Commune. With a touch of pleading in his voice Louis recommended his faithful valet, Cléry, and other servants at the Tuileries and Versailles, to the protection of the officers. Then in a firm, steady voice he said, 'Let us go.' As he went down the stairs, preceded and followed by his guards, he caught sight of Mathey, the concierge, a man who had treated the royal prisoners with persistent incivility. The King paused a moment before him. 'I was somewhat hasty a day or two ago,' he said, gently. 'Pray forgive me.' A green carriage was in waiting outside the Temple, and the King got into it, without assistance. Santerre and his officers marvelled at this wonderful *sang-froid*. The Abbé Edgeworth, the King's confessor, and an officer named Lieutenant Lebrasse, rode in the carriage, Santerre preceding it at the head of his artillery. Not a sound broke the dead silence of the journey to the scaffold. The soul of Paris seemed asleep. Louis read his breviary with moving lips. Once he looked up to recommend the abbé to the protection of the lieutenant. Once, also, he gazed out of the window, with a startled look, at a sudden sound of shouting and the clatter of arms. A loud, clear voice cried out an astounding appeal. 'Help! Frenchmen, help to save the King!' Four men broke through the line of guards with drawn swords. For a moment the procession came to a standstill. Then there was a groan of agony. Two of those four daring men were cut to pieces. The other two, afterwards known to be the Baron de Batz

and Jean Louis Devaux, a treasury official, plunged into the crowd and escaped, though the latter was afterwards captured and beheaded. It was a startling incident, but it was only a momentary interruption to the funeral pace of the mournful procession. Upon arriving at the place of execution Louis alighted from the carriage and walked firmly, and without assistance, to the scaffold. There was a surging among the crowd eager to catch a glimpse of the doomed man who had been their king. But the soldiers kept their ranks, and at the hoarse command of Santerre the drummers beat out a roll of thunderous music which drowned the beast-like cries of the excited mob. As Louis reached the platform of the guillotine, Sanson the executioner and his assistants pressed round him to help in undressing him for the gruesome bed of death. The King pushed them away, shrugging off their obscene hands, and, standing alone at the edge of the scaffold, took off his coat and cravat.

Again Sanson and the men approached him, with ropes in their hands. Louis started and turned deathly pale. 'What is it you want? To bind my hands? It is not necessary. I am quite calm.' Sanson and his masked men argued loudly, and with eager gesticulation. They had to fulfil their duties. The King must allow them to do their work. Louis protested again, and the noise of the argument was heard below by the mob, who became more excited by this scene on the stage above their heads. The Abbé Edgeworth drew close to the King. 'It is better to submit, sire,' he whispered. The King drew a deep breath, then he held out his hands. 'Do with me what you will,' he said. 'I will drink this cup to the dregs.' In a moment his hands were bound, and with a clip of a long pair of shears his hair was cut down to the neck. The drums were still



Dessiné par Monnet

LA MORT DE LOUIS CAPET SUR LA PLACE DE LA RÉVOLUTION

le 21 Janvier 1793.

beating their death tattoo, but with an imperious gesture the King silenced them. 'Frenchmen,' he cried, in a clear voice, 'I die innocent of all the charges against me.' A groan burst from the crowd, and there were hoarse cries of 'Mercy! Mercy!' The King opened his lips to speak again, but Santerre, with an oath, spurred his horse towards the drummers. 'Play up,' he shouted; 'don't let him speak!' Again the drummers beat a muffled tattoo, and suddenly the King was seized and strapped to the board beneath the knife. But again he spoke, his voice reaching down to the people whose necks were craned upwards. 'I forgive all those who have sought my death. I pray God that the blood you are about to shed may not be avenged on France. And you, unhappy people——' The sentence was unfinished. Sanson pulled the rope, and with a hiss the broad blade of the guillotine fell. France was no longer a kingdom, and the crimes of the Capets were avenged by the guiltless blood of the sixteenth Louis. The people surged round the scaffold like madmen, shouting, weeping, laughing, groaning and blaspheming. There were one or two shouts of '*Vive la République!*' and then the soldiers had to fight the maddened mob. It was a horrible scene, and the splendid dignity of the victim, the courage and quietude with which he had faced his death, contrasted nobly with the unrestrained savagery of the people who had made him a sacrifice.

To Marie Antoinette the loss of her husband was a profound grief. It has been often assumed that she had but little affection and no admiration for Louis XVI., and that to this beautiful and imaginative woman the somewhat gross and bovine character of the King had been repellent and exasperating. Yet all evidence goes to show that in spite of the many occasions on which their opinions differed,

and where the weakness and irresolution as well as the amiability of Louis must have seemed to her lamentable and fatal, she had a strong, sincere admiration for his noble quality of courage, and returned his steady, unfailing devotion to her with equal love. He could not have satisfied her imagination, but she had a sense of safety and peace in her domestic relations. For nearly ten months she mourned him in her dreary, melancholy widowhood, and these were the most unhappy months of a life which had been full of tragedy. The young Dauphin was handed over to brutal men, who made him stupid by ill-treatment and weak in body and mind. It was the most exquisite torture for the mother, and but for her helpless children death would have seemed gracious to her.

It was on October 12, 1793, at six in the evening that she was summoned to the presence of Fouquier-Tinville, the judge whose sentences had cost so many fair and noble lives, and who presided over what with devilish humour was called the Tribunal of Justice. It was for a preliminary examination. The next day the indictment was read to her, and it was not until October 14, at eight in the morning, that the trial began. It was but a mockery of a trial, for she was condemned, in the minds of her judges, before the evidence was taken. Marie Antoinette was well aware that her death was determined, but the thought did not make her quail. She sat in the iron chair, in which so many men and women, now dead, had listened to their doom, with a majesty and dignity not lessened by the plain and threadbare widow's dress. She was only thirty-eight years of age, a young woman still, as age is now reckoned, but her perfectly white hair, and her pallor and delicate appearance, made her seem much older. Yet she was not without beauty, and, indeed, the marks of suffering upon her face and the great sorrow

in her eyes, the pride of the sensitive mouth, gave her a more spiritual beauty than when she had been in the heyday of her youth.

There is no need to repeat the long and tedious examination, nor is it well now to print such vile accusations as Hébert, the opposing counsel, made against her moral character. To these she did not deign to answer, keeping proudly silent until the President questioned her. Then, in a voice which thrilled the silent and breathless spectators, the men who pitied her because she was a woman and beautiful, the women who perhaps had less of pity, she made her famous answer:

'If I have not replied it is because Nature refuses to reply to such an accusation. I appeal to every mother here.'

So profound was the emotion caused by these nobly indignant words that Hébert was afterwards blamed severely, by those who had least love for the Queen, because, by his grossness, he had given her such an opportunity of rebuke. They feared that, if Marie Antoinette appealed in such a way to the natural instincts of Frenchwomen, the evidence of her undeniable guilt in treating with foreign Powers would be obscured by sympathy and pity for her sufferings. But there was really not much danger of this. The judges of Marie Antoinette had no mercy in their hearts, and the women who knitted socks for their babies in the court where a queen was being tried for her life did not represent the people of France, to whom Marie Antoinette was a scarlet woman, guilty of abominable crime. Chauveau-Lagarde, the Queen's counsel, spoke for two hours in her defence with an impassioned eloquence that was at least a testimony to his courage, though it had but little effect on his auditors. When he sat down the Queen bent forward to him, and with

a gracious kindliness said, 'How tired you must be! I am deeply grateful to you.'

She was then withdrawn from the court, while the President proceeded with his summing up. It was a calmly cruel analysis of the evidence, and there was no doubt as to the verdict when he put the final question to the jury: 'Has Marie Antoinette been guilty of complicity with foreign Powers and with conspirators at home?'

An hour had passed when the Queen was brought back to hear the sentence which she knew would be her condemnation to death. The crowd in the court craned forward to gaze at her, but there was not a sound except the rustling of the women's dresses, the shuffling of feet, and the deeply drawn breaths of tense excitement. Marie Antoinette passed to her place, without a word or gesture. Her head was held high, and she gazed with grave and brave eyes at the people before her. Never had she looked so majestic as at that moment, when, in her widow's dress, she swept to the iron seat and listened to the dread words without a quiver of her proud lips. The end had come at last, and the death which had been so often close to her was now at hand.

At half-past four on the following morning, while Paris was still in darkness, there was a call to arms in every section of the city, and the streets resounded with the muffled tramp of soldiers. At seven o'clock, Sanson the executioner knocked at the Queen's door, and entered without further ceremony. Marie Antoinette raised her head at his entrance. She had been praying, and her face bore the stain of tears. 'You are early, sir,' she said, quietly. 'Can you not postpone it a little while?'

The executioner shook his head.

'No, Madame; I have had orders to come.'

He waited while the Queen made her last toilet. She

Beaulieu del

JUGEMENT DE MARIE ANTOINETTE D'AUTRICHE
AU TRIBUNAL RÉVOLUTIONNAIRE

cut off her white hair close to the neck and covered it with a white lawn cap. Then she changed the black gown for a white one, with a white bodice tied at the wrists with black ribbon, and a muslin fichu round her neck. A Constitutional priest, the Abbé Girard, had come to offer his services as a confessor, but she refused him.

'Do you wish me to accompany you, Madame?' he asked, as she prepared to leave her prison for the last time.

'As you wish,' she said, in a tone of cool indifference.

It was a quarter past eleven when she left the Conciergerie. Her arms had been tied with a rope, and Sanson held one end of it as he helped her into the wooden cart upon which a wooden plank had been laid across as a seat. Then during the journey he stood, with his head uncovered, before her. All Paris was in the streets, or upon the roofs and in the windows of the houses along the route. Thirty thousand soldiers were drawn up in double line from the Temple to the Place de la Révolution, and gendarmes, mounted and on foot, kept back the vast concourse of surging people. As the Queen passed the Tuileries she gazed at the place where she had spent so many months with her husband and children, and where she had so narrowly escaped death at the hands of the mob. She raised her eyes to heaven, and as the cart rumbled onwards her lips moved in prayer. So the end came. As she made her way across the scaffold she trod upon Sanson's foot. Even in these dread moments she did not lose that exquisite sense of courtesy which came not so much from good breeding as straight from the heart. 'I beg your pardon, sir,' she said to the man who was about to kill her. 'It was quite unintentional.' Her arms being still bound, she threw off her cap with a movement of the head. Then she lay down upon the board and in a moment Sanson's work was done. A young man dashed out of the

crowd and bathed his hands in her blood, not through joy in her death, but as if it were the blood of a martyr that might cleanse the soul. He was dragged down by fierce hands and arrested on a charge of treason. Even now she was dead, the friends of Marie Antoinette must pay the penalty of friendship towards the woman who was called traitress by the people.

To French people now the memory of Marie Antoinette is no longer hateful. Innocent they cannot call her, for it is written in history that she did indeed conspire with the enemies of the nation and urged the King to crush the Revolution from which, in spite of its ferocity and cruelty, the seeds of liberty have grown to a goodly tree. But French men and women have pity now, not hatred, for this woman of strong will and fatal obstinacy who would not yield to the forces that rose against her family and throne. The vile stories and obscenities that maligned her character, while she was living, have long been buried in the dust; and though, as Queen, Marie Antoinette had many faults and much foolishness, being slow to recognise the righteousness of the democratic ideal, and resolute in thwarting it, as a woman she remains as a gracious figure, unspotted in her purity, and of exalted courage.

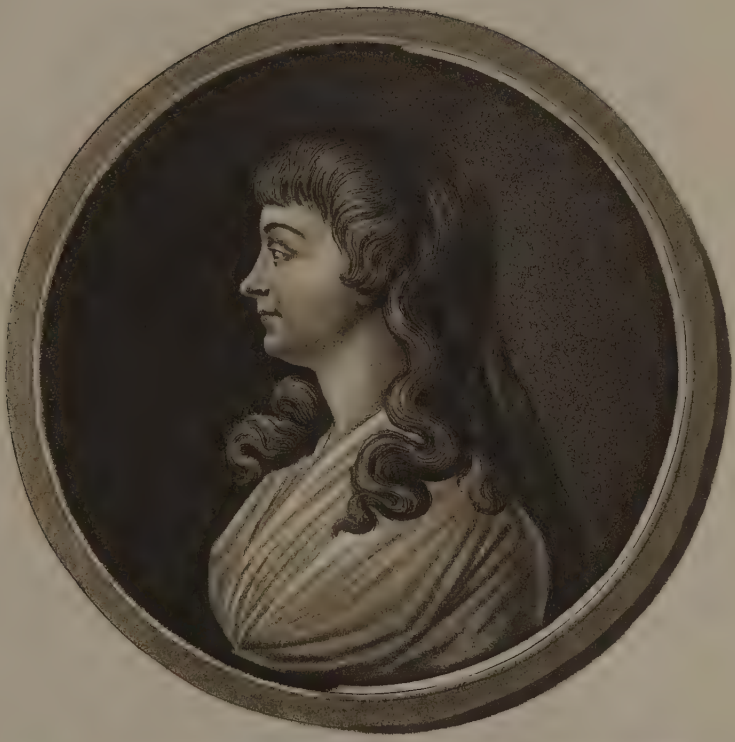
CHAPTER IX

THE GIRONDINS

History has surrounded the famous party of the Girondins with a glamour of idealism. It is necessary, in every drama except that of real life, to provide heroes and heroines whose characters shall be blameless, and whose fate may be followed with sympathetic emotion. So the Girondins have been made the heroes of the French Revolution by writers who have been shocked by the extreme views of such men as Marat, Danton, Desmoulins, and Robespierre, yet who acknowledge the rights of democracy, and the essential justice of the Revolution. The Girondins, as they were loosely called, have seemed, to superficial students of history, pure and exalted patriots, desiring liberty for the people, yet remaining loyal to the monarchy. That they fell victims to the Terror seems to absolve them from participation in the revolutionary excesses, and to exalt them to the rank of martyrdom. That they were the founders of the liberal constitution seems to establish their right to be called the champions of liberty and law. That they were joined in the fellowship of death seems to prove the unanimity of their principles ; and that they were the enemies of the ' Mountain ' is taken as a proof of their moderation. The memoirs of Madame Roland, whose salon was the rendezvous of the party, and who was the Egeria of the leading Girondins, have helped to spread the idealism with which the memory of these men is still surrounded. The magic of her literary

style, the fascination of her personality, and the tragedy of her fate have arrested the attention of many generations, so that the portraits of her friends, sketched in vivid but far too flattering colours, have passed for historical truth. History, however, should not be written with sentiment, and if the false idealism which has exaggerated the virtues and glossed over the weaknesses of the Girondins is stripped from them they shrink at once from heroic stature. Personal ambition and foolish vanity too often accompanied their political ideals. Their loyalty to the constitutional monarchy was marred by secret treacheries and a final betrayal. Differences of principles and policy, and private jealousies and feuds, divided their party into hostile cliques. And lastly, instead of the heroism with which they have been endowed by imaginative writers, a deeper knowledge of their lives leads us to the disappointing conclusion that some of them, at least, were guilty of great cowardice.

And yet, in spite of this, the Girondins must still claim the admiration and the sympathy of students who have learnt to allow for human weakness. They were not heroes of melodrama, but as men, with a full measure of frailty, they make a call upon the imagination and the heart. The tragedy of their failure and death is not less tragic because it was partly due to folly and frustrated ambition. Their endeavours to find a middle way between liberty and anarchy were not wholly ignoble because some of them played carelessly with edged tools, and because others were not strong enough to resist reaction. Even the cowardice of some of them is not an unpardonable sin; for, of those who read the history of the party in the peace and security of the modern world, how many would not falter before the terrors with which these men were surrounded, or would not shirk the violent death which at last claimed them? To know the



Duplessi-Bertaux

MARIE-JEANNE-PHÉLIPPON

FEMME DE ROLAND.

Girondins as they really were in life, and not as they have been portrayed by 'touchers-up' of historical portraits, increases one's sympathy, indeed, does not destroy it. The exalted courage of Madame Roland impresses one more, not less, when we understand her immense vanity and her womanly weaknesses; and the pathetic end of Roland, when he died by his own hand, stirs our deepest emotions when we understand the cold, dry, pedantic, and priggish nature of that elderly little man who, by the irony of fate, was thrust into the midst of violence and brute force. The polished and classical mind of Vergniaud, with his incurable indolence and his shrinking sensitiveness to the roughness and coarseness of life, must be known to understand his courage and to pardon his timidity, and nothing can be more moving and pathetic than the revolutionary career of Condorcet, 'the last of the philosophers,' when we realise the ferocity which closed round this poor star-gazer and idealist, who believed that revolutions might be accomplished with all the amenities of an academic debate, and that the liberties of a nation might be established by learned treatises upon the principles of Greek civilisation.

There is, indeed, a sublime pathos in the struggle of the Girondins against forces which they but dimly understood. They had come from the provinces with high-mounting enthusiasm, and a firm conviction that upon their shoulders lay the destinies of the French nation. Before their courage had been put to the test by failure, they had a joyous exaltation of spirits, and an audacity which seemed as good as courage. In the salon of Madame Roland they discussed ideals as if they were firm realities, and in the Assembly argued upon points of order and constitutional law with all the pedantry of a provincial academy. They firmly believed, and for a time it seemed, that they held all the trump cards

of this national game in their hands. They had a large majority in the Assembly. The King was forced to summon a ministry from their party, and it seemed an easy and delightful thing to establish a new era of liberty and law with the monarchy subject to their influence, and the people grateful for their service. And yet, while they were revelling in an intellectual orgy of law-making, slowly but surely forces were rising around them to crush them between the millstones of fate. They were the middle party of the State, and the temper of France was divided by extremes. On the one side were the King and the Royalist party, who suffered the Girondins for a time, but feared and hated them for their democratic idealism. On the other side were the people themselves, led by wild spirits and red republicans, who despised them for their moderation, and waited for opportunities of anarchy. For a time the Girondins were self-satisfied and happy in their own conceit. But gradually they became uneasy and alarmed, startled out of their security by perceiving that there were powers below and above them over which they had no control. The King was not so subject to them as they had believed. He was obstinate in the exercise of his veto, and the forces of reaction were still strong in resistance. A Royalist revival gave the King a new position, and he made use of it to turn out the Girondin ministry. It was a shock to their vanity, a still greater shock to their ambitions, and it strained their loyalty to the monarchical constitution which they had themselves fashioned. But this was only one, and the less important, of their dangers. For many months the voice of the people had been threatening and angry, and in the Assembly the minority of the 'Mountain' had been difficult to control, and audacious in its challenge. The Dantonists outraged their sense of decency and order by violent accusa-

tions of treachery and inefficiency. Outside the Assembly the Jacobins and the Cordeliers had formed parliaments more in touch with the people, and Marat and Robespierre, Danton and Desmoulins, rang the changes on the cry of treason. For a time the Girondins had not been terrified by such clamour, and Brissot, Guadet, Louvet, and Vergniaud, confident in the majority of their party, had answered accusations with rebukes, and violence with dignity. But the awakening came when Marat was impeached by them and acquitted by the people, and when the King, forced into decision by the Queen and the Royalists, turned upon the constitutional party and evicted them from office.

It was a cold and bitter awakening. In the first shock of it the fine principles of the Girondins crumbled away, and all their weakness and their personal ambitions were revealed. They were enclosed with terror. The 'Mountain' was baying at them, and the Royalists sneering. On one side of them was the vengeance of their political enemies, on the other a new reign of despotism beneath which they might be crushed. And so they intrigued and plotted—intrigued with the Royalists to regain their influence over the Crown, and plotted with the people to terrorise both the Royalists and the Jacobins. It was a fall from grace, and punished with a success that ruined them, as happens sometimes with dishonest games. Some at least of the Girondin leaders pulled the wires of the insurrection which led to the fall of the Tuileries. It was they who sent for the Marseillais, the riffraff of the southern provinces, who came in ferocious bands to Paris, singing the wild hymn of Rouget de Lisle, which now startled the echoes in the capital with dreadful harmonies, working a madness in the blood of the people of Paris with its stirring rhythm and enraging words. The Girondins who had summoned them—Pétion and Barbaroux

and Madame Roland, the boldest of the Girondins—were unleashing forces of insurrection which would end by devouring them. Their object was to coerce the Court party, and they succeeded with a terrifying success. The atrocities at the Tuileries horrified even those who had shared in the plot, and the result was the downfall of their party. It was the Jacobins and the 'Mountain,' not the Girondins, who obtained the advantage of the rising. The people abandoned the middlemen, and they were left high and dry, with only the symbols of power. The Commune was established as the Inquisition of the Assembly, and in the Committee of Public Safety, which as a revolutionary tribunal inaugurated the Terror, not a single Girondin had a place or voice. Robespierre and the 'Mountain,' Danton and the municipality, became the rulers of France, and their work was to destroy the monarchy, the constitution, and the constitutional party. The Girondins saw the pit that yawned before them. Vainly they strove to regain their supremacy. Vainly they allied themselves now with the Royalists and now with the people. Fate was against them. The treason of Lafayette and Dumouriez, their own generals, entangled them in a network of suspicion and gave them into the hands of their enemies. They became the slaves of fear, and, hoping to save their own lives, voted for the death of the King whom they desired to save. His execution was the sign of their defeat, and the September massacres were a revelation to them of the unchained dragons that lurked in waiting for them. They turned sick at heart, and despair closed upon them. Some fled to the provinces, Barbaroux, Grangeneuve, Guadet, Salles and Biroteau to raise a rebellion in the south-west, which ended in defeat and death upon the scaffold. Of the others who fled, Lidon and Chambon were guillotined at Brives, Valady at Périgueux, Dechézeau at Marseilles, while

Pétion, Roland, Buzot, and Condorcet put an end to their own lives by stabbing, drowning, or poisoning themselves. Even those who had the courage to face things through made but a poor show of courage until all was lost. The bravest of them were Lanjuinais and Louvet, who denounced the Terrorists with a passionate eloquence that might have saved them if all the Girondins had been as bold.

Vergniaud and Brissot, who had been the former leaders of the party, showed, in these last months, only a passive courage, absenting themselves from the Convention, and yielding their claims to leadership. At the trial of the twenty-one the Girondins fell furthest from heroism, and one's heart aches at the poor cowardice of these doomed men who tried to shuffle out of death by forswearing their lifelong principles, by accusing those who had fled, by denying the moderation of their acts, and by professing the gospel of popular violence. That was the hour of their shame; yet when their death sentence was pronounced some of them at least regained their courage, and when they went to the scaffold it was with an air of heroic indifference to death, and with the song of liberty on their lips. So are most men compounded of courage and cowardice, nobility and meanness, faith and infidelity, and that the Girondins had the frailties of human nature does not disinherit them from the sympathy of their fellow-creatures.

It is one of those romances which make history seem unreal that the policy of the Girondins should have been largely outlined by a woman. For all evidence goes to show that Madame Roland was more than the hostess of the party, more even than an influence in their counsels. According to her own account at least, and by internal evidence it is quite credible, she actually wrote many of the reports which were duly signed by her husband as Minister of the Interior,

and it was she who gave the literary style to his official documents when the style of a phrase might help to shape the destiny of a nation. There is no more remarkable book in the world than the 'Memoirs' of Madame Roland, written in prison while the scaffold was waiting for her. In spite of its exaggerations and inaccuracies, it is immensely valuable as a key to historical facts, but not least in value is its revelation of the Girondin temperament and of the atmosphere in which these men drew breath. Madame Roland herself, as described by her own pen with amazing candour, was a type of all that was best and worst in the characters of the so-called moderate party. Her vast vanity, so unrestrained that it shocks the modern reader as an outrage upon human decency, was hardly an exaggeration of the self-complacency of such men as Lafayette (who was not, of course, a Girondin, though he shared their policy), of Brissot, Pétion, Bailly, Barbaroux, and Roland himself. Her education—unpractical, poetic, steeped in the heroic memories of Greece and Rome, and tinged with a superficial knowledge of the old philosophies—was exactly the same sort of mental *pabulum* which had nourished such characters as those of Buzot, Gensonné, and indeed of all the Girondins who claimed any culture. Her ignorance of the real problems of social economy and statecraft was not greater than that of the men who drew up the Constitution. Her philanthropy was founded on sentiment rather than upon deep and sincere emotion, and her democratic principles were political and literary, rather than humane. Marat and Danton were much nearer to the soul of the people, and were more sincerely moved by their hunger and agonies, than the men who came nicely dressed to Madame Roland's salon. Theirs was a *bourgeois* philosophy of life. And apart from their literary pose, which was unreal and insincere, their principles of liberty, fraternity,

and equality were strictly limited to the *bourgeois* class. One episode of Madame Roland's life throws a sidelight not only upon her own character but upon that of her party. When she first came to Paris with her husband, she endeavoured, though vainly, to obtain for him certain titles of nobility which had formerly belonged to his family, but had fallen into abeyance. It was only when she failed in this ambition that she became rancorous in her hatred to the French nobility, and went over to the side of the democrats. There can be no doubt that this jealousy of the middle class for those who enjoyed privileges and honours which they could not share was a strong though, perhaps, an unconscious motive in the hostility of the *bourgeoisie* to the aristocrats. On the other hand, Madame Roland's vigorous enthusiasm, her amazing gift of eloquence, her audacity, her horror of the atrocities that disgraced the Revolution, and her splendid courage, when she ascended the scaffold above the heads of the ferocious mob, were also typical of the temperament and qualities of the Girondin party as a whole.

Madame Roland, however, must not be described only as a type. Her individuality was so marked and so interesting, and her career was so romantic, that she deserves a separate portrait.

Manon Jeanne Phlipon was born at Paris in 1754. Her father was an engraver of some substance, and she was the second of his seven children, six of whom died young, according to that prodigality of infant life which is so noticeable in the annals of past centuries, leaving her as the only child. Gifted with a strong intelligence and keen sensibilities, Manon became a precocious girl, developing an early love for literature and large ideas. At nine years of age she had read the Bible, with shrewd comments of her own, 'Telemachus,' Locke's 'Treatise on Education,' Plutarch's

'Lives,' and Voltaire's 'Candide.' Afterwards she read largely in theology of every kind, becoming successively, she says, Jansenist, Cartesian, Stoic, and Deist, and then turned to the destructive philosophy of Diderot, D'Alembert, Helvétius, and Voltaire, which broadened her intellect at the expense of faith. But the writers who had most influence upon her emotional character were Plutarch and Rousseau. From the former she imbibed the ideals of an heroic republic, which at first were only the literary predilections of a lively imagination, but afterwards became the political principles of an ambitious woman. 'Plutarch,' she says, 'seemed to be exactly the food that suited my mind. I shall never forget the Lent of 1763, at which time I was nine years of age, when I carried it to church instead of my prayer-book. From that period I may date the impressions and ideas that rendered me a republican, though I did not then dream that I should ever be the citizen of a republic.' From Rousseau Manon Phlipon received much stimulus to her imagination and her emotions. The sentimentality of Rousseau was a new thing in French literature, and his raptures upon nature and natural laws exercised an immense influence upon so impressionable a nature as that of the future Madame Roland. She, perhaps unconsciously, modelled the literary style of her 'Memoirs' upon Rousseau's 'Confessions,' and the unabashed candour with which she describes the sensuousness of her girlhood, when the natural instincts of the flesh first troubled her, is an imitation of Rousseau's own frankness in self-revelation. So also her candid self-complacency, and the detached manner in which she described the seductiveness of her person in youth, and the generous and lofty qualities of her mind, were inspired by the wonderful book in which Rousseau dissected his soul and painted his own portrait for the benefit of posterity. The catalogue she

gives of her charms is startling in self-praise. 'At fourteen years as now,' she wrote in prison when the closeness of death might have annihilated vanity, 'my stature was about five feet, for I had completed my growth; my leg and foot were well formed; the hips full and bold; the chest large and the bust well rounded; my shoulders of an elegant *tournure*; my carriage firm and graceful, my step light and quick. Such was the first impression. As to my face, there was nothing in it specially striking of itself, save, perhaps, the fresh colour, the tenderness and expression. To go into details. "Where," it may be asked, "is the beauty?" Not a feature is regular, but all please. The mouth is rather large—one sees a thousand that are prettier—but where is there a smile more sweet and engaging? The eye is scarcely large enough, and its iris of a grayish hue; but though somewhat prominently set, it is frank, lively and tender, crowned by delicately pencilled brown eyebrows (the colour of my hair), and its expression varies with the changing emotions of the soul whose activity it reflects; grave and haughty, at times it imposes, but it charms oftener, and is always animated. The nose gave me some uneasiness; I thought it too full at the end, but regarded with the rest, and especially in profile, it did not detract from the general effect of the face. The ample forehead, at that age exposed and unhidden by the hair, with arched eyebrows, and veins in the form of the Greek γ, that dilated at the slightest emotion, dignified an *ensemble* remote enough from the insignificance of so many faces. As for the chin, which was slightly retiring, it has the precise characteristics attributed by physiognomists to the voluptuary. Indeed, when I combine all the peculiarities of my character, I doubt if ever an individual was more formed for pleasure or has tasted it so little. The complexion was clear rather than fair; its lively colours were frequently

heightened by a sudden effervescence of blood, occasioned by nerves the most sensitive ; the skin soft and smooth ; the arms finely rounded ; the hand elegant, without being small, because the fingers, long and slender, announce dexterity and preserve grace ; teeth white and well arranged ; and lastly, the plenitude and plumpness of perfect health ; such are the gifts with which nature had endowed me.'

This self-drawn portrait of the woman who played such an important and romantic part in the Revolution is as interesting as it is ludicrous in its vanity. How many hours must have been spent before the looking-glass to obtain such an accurate inventory of her personal possessions ! We have it on excellent authority that 'man looketh into a glass and straightway goeth away and forgetteth himself' ; but however this may be with regard to man, Madame Roland, *née* Manon Phlipon, disproves it for her own sex.

The narrative of her girlhood gives a vivid picture of *bourgeois* life in France, but in this book we may only allude to it in passing. Throughout these pages the modern reader sees how the girl's heart rankled at the knowledge of her social mediocrity, and the witty vivacity with which she describes her quaint and humble neighbours, her socially superior relatives, and the middle-class lovers who sought her hand, is spoilt a little by spitefulness. She is self-revealed as a snob, and it is somewhat startling to find this woman, who helped to establish a Republic and died as a martyr for her principles, sneering at people of her own class because they were 'vulgar' and 'commonplace,' and abusing those above her in rank, as she frankly avows, because they enjoyed privileges which she could not share. The faithful butcher who offered her his heart is refused with scorn because he is her 'inferior,' and other suitors who coveted those charms she has so deliberately set forth went away abashed

before this young lady of disdain. Better had it been for her happiness if she had accepted one of those honest and humble men instead of wedding her fresh young spring to the withered winter of M. Roland de La Platière, whose title of gentility satisfied her social aspirations. She was under no illusions as to her husband's physical unsuitability to match her charms. When he was first introduced to her she saw him as 'a man past forty, of a negligent air, and that sort of stiffness that comes of studious habits; but his address was easy and direct, and though it lacked the polish of the world, it joined the air of good birth to the dignity of the philosopher. A face somewhat lean and sallow, a broad brow already but sparsely furnished with hair, regular features, made up an *ensemble* that was imposing rather than seductive. When Roland became animated in conversation, or when he was inspired by a specially agreeable idea, his subtle smile and animated face made him appear quite a different person. His voice was manly, and he spoke in short sentences, like one whose respiration is laboured; his discourse was full of matter, and exercised the judgment more than it flattered the ear, his speech was piquant at times, but harsh and inharmonious in delivery.'

From other sources, and from many thinly veiled phrases in the 'Memoirs,' we know that Roland was a dry, austere man, immensely pedantic, filled with a prim conceit, and utterly lacking in any sense of humour. But Manon Phlipon was impressed with his gentility and his philosophic air, and the quiet persistence with which the man of forty-five went about his wooing broke down the natural hesitation of the full-blooded young girl.

'At length,' she writes, 'I became the wife of a man of genuine worth, who loved me more in proportion as his knowledge of me increased. Married thus, with my own

full consent, I found nothing to make me repent of the step ; I devoted myself to him with a zeal perhaps more ardent than discreet. Considering only the happiness of my partner, I saw that he lacked something for the completion of mine. I have not for a moment ceased to behold in my husband one of the most estimable of men, to whom I deem it an honour to belong ; but I have often been sensible of a certain lack of parity between us, and felt that the ascendency of a somewhat masterful character, added to twenty years of seniority, rendered one of these superiorities too great. If we had lived in solitude I should have had many disagreeable hours to pass ; had we mingled much in the world, I might have been loved by some whose affection, as I have learned, might touch me too deeply ; I plunged, therefore, into work with my husband—an excess which also had its drawbacks, since he soon grew so accustomed to my aid as to be unable to dispense with it.' The first years of the Rolands' married life were spent at Villefranche and Lyons, and it was only in 1791 that they came to settle permanently at Paris, in the Rue de la Harpe. Roland was in charge of certain negotiations respecting the municipality of Lyons, and was brought into close contact with the leading Girondins. Madame Roland, whose political enthusiasms had been inflamed by the capture of the Bastille and the progress of the Revolution, attended the meetings of the Constituent Assembly and became acquainted with the men whose tragic fate she was to share. Her remarkable and charming personality, her strong intelligent literary culture and warm sympathies, attracted the Girondins more than the austerity and pedantry of Roland de la Platière, and for her sake rather than for his the apartments in the Rue de la Harpe became the social rendezvous of the party.

'It was arranged,' writes Madame Roland, 'that they

Duplessi-Bertaux

JEAN MARIE ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE

should come to my house four times a week, because I was a stay-at-home, and comfortably lodged, and because my flat was so situated as to be within easy distance of all those who formed these little committees [of the Assembly]. Brissot, Buzot, Barbaroux, Condorcet, Pétion, and even Robespierre, who at this time was still a non-party man, attended these evening receptions, fascinated by the keen wit and ardent politics of their hostess, as well as by the seductive charms of her person, which she knew how to make use of with discretion. In her salon the principles and policy of the Girondin party were discussed with the utmost candour and unrestraint, and it is certain that these men, who with all their weaknesses were among the most brilliant intellects of France, were not ashamed to shape their ideas according to the advice of the young woman who had no hesitation in giving it. Madame Roland allowed no other woman to share her privilege of political conversation. In this she was partly influenced by her lifelong snobbishness, having a lofty contempt for the provincial and *bourgeois* manners of such women as Pétion's wife, whom she caricatures as a domesticated creature with ideas limited to the holes in her husband's shirts. But alas! if other women had come into her salon, the character of the conversation would have run upon different lines. She herself had an essentially masculine mind save for the emotional temperament which lay beneath her intellectual audacity, and, like many women who have a contempt for feminine sentiment and weakness, she was less cautious, less merciful, and more daring in her ideas and speech than the men who frequented her rooms. The timidity of Roland himself would never have achieved such revolutionary progress as he afterwards attained to, had it not been for the strong little woman behind him, and although she may exaggerate her influence upon the Girondin party as a

whole, yet undoubtedly some of their most dangerous schemes were instigated and abetted by Roland's wife.

It was through the admiration she had won from Brissot and Pétion that, when the King was forced to call a Girondin Ministry in March of 1792, Roland de la Platière was nominated as Minister of the Interior. To Roland himself it came as a great surprise, but one can hardly believe the sincerity of his wife in her expressions of astonishment at the honour thrust upon him, for without a doubt she had been playing for it with ambitious artfulness. With immense satisfaction to their *amour-propre*, Roland and his wife took up residence in the splendid Hôtel du Ministère. As Home Secretary, as we should call his position in this country, Roland had great responsibilities and an immense burden of work. He was in constant communication with every department in France, and his instructions to the provincial authorities dealt with every branch of local government. It was a position of tremendous influence, and a strong man in such a place might have guided the Revolution into orderly channels of progress. But Roland was a weak man and a pedant, and if he had not had his wife behind him his incompetence to handle the great task would have been more glaring As it was, she conducted a large amount of his official correspondence and led him into certain audacities of expression and policy, which were in strong contrast to the timidity of his own administration.

'I did not meddle at all with admini tration,' writes Madame Roland, 'but if it were a question of a circular or an instruction, of some public and important document, we conferred about it, accord ng to our customary confidence in each other and impregnated with his ideas, nourished with mine, I took up the pen, which I had more time than he had to handle. Both having the same ideas and the same

temperament, we ended by agreeing as to the manner, and my husband had nothing to lose by yielding himself into my hands I painted what he had achieved or what he could promise to do better than he could have put it into words. Roland, without me, would not have been any good as an administrator ; with me he produced more sensation, because I put into his writings that mixture of strength and sweetness, of authority and reason, and charm of sentiment, which perhaps could belong only to a sensible woman endowed with a clear head. With immense delight I wrote any documents which I believed should be useful, and I experienced more pleasure in the work than if I had been known as its author.'

We may remark in passing, without, however, too much cynicism, that in her 'Memoirs,' at any rate, Madame Roland was eager to prove her superiority to her husband.

'For thirteen years of my life,' she writes, 'I have laboured with my husband. If one quoted a piece from his works in which one found exceptional grace of style, I rejoiced in his satisfaction, without noticing particularly if it was what I had done myself, and he often ended by persuading himself that in truth he had been in good form when he had written some passage which came from my pen.'

Madame Roland had a sense of humour which added to the exhilaration of her spirits when writing the official reports and instructions under the sign-manual of the Minister of the Interior. She was much tickled, for example, by inditing a letter to the Sovereign Pontiff. 'A letter to the Pope,' she writes, 'in the name of the Executive Council of France, secretly drawn up by a woman, in the austere cabinet which Marat was pleased to call a boudoir, seemed to me so exquisite a thing that I laughed a good deal after having done it.'

It is difficult now to trace the hand of Madame Roland in the documents issued under her husband's authority, but the cynic would at least suspect that the young woman who so arrogantly refused the plebeian hands of so many suitors, and who tried to obtain a patent of nobility for her husband, inspired the following proclamation to provincial bodies. Dated November 20, 1792, it runs thus :

'The most absurd of all distinctions, that which pretended that some men are born above others, no longer exists, but its ridiculous traces are still found in certain places. In many provincial libraries there exist genealogical and other similar works calculated to perpetuate pride of birth and the remembrance of the old slavery of reason. The decree which proscribed the bearing of all titles of nobility did not actually mention genealogical and heraldic books, but there can be no doubt that in the reign of equality the Republican administrators must extend the proscription of the law to all such objects. I therefore charge you to have them collected in all the national libraries and to give the necessary orders for them to be destroyed in the same way as titles of nobility.'

Madame Roland, once having plunged into politics on the revolutionary side, was characteristically thorough. By re-reading Plutarch and Plato she revived all the republican ideals of her girlhood, and was violently hostile to the monarchy at a time when the Girondin party were loyal to the established constitution. Roland himself believed the King to be sincere in his desire to work harmoniously with the Girondin Ministry, and was both pleased and flattered at the King's amiability. But when he and Clavière (the Minister of Finance, whom we have met before as Mirabeau's friend) used to set out for an audience, Madame Roland was impatient with their pride and preening. '"Good God!"

I would say to them, "You look as if you were going to make fools of yourselves."' Afterwards, when the King stood on his trial, Roland's wife was not on the side of mercy, and her hostility to the Queen was fierce and unrelenting. In her salon, therefore, as hostess of the 'moderates' she was not such a 'sweet and softening influence' as imaginative biographers have depicted her. She rather urged them on to extreme measures, and her moderation, as indeed that of the whole party, was only limited by the nervousness of mob law by which they themselves might perish.

Among the men who came to her salon, the most remarkable, or at least the most powerful, was Brissot, the real leader of the party of the Girondins, who in the contemporary history of the Revolution were more commonly called 'Brissotins.' She has left us a vivid little impression of him, a clear-cut cameo portrait, which is not inaccurate if we may get at the truth of him from contemporary notes.

'The simple manners of Brissot,' she says, 'his frankness and natural negligence, seemed to me in perfect harmony with the austerity of his principles, but I found in him a sort of frivolity of mind and character which did not suit so well the philosophic gravity; that has always troubled me, and his enemies have always taken advantage of it. His writings are more calculated to achieve good results than his personality, because they have all the authority which reason, justice, and illumination may give to such works, whereas personally he had none of that, lacking dignity. . . . He was not a good hater; one would say that his soul, extremely sensitive as it was, had not strength enough for so vigorous a sentiment. With much learning work comes easy to him, and he composes a treatise as another might copy a song.' This frivolity of manner, coupled with a fine gravity of style when a pen was in his hand, is a characteristic

of Brissot noted by more than one contemporary. The son of a pastrycook at Chartres, he had been educated as a lawyer out of the profits of tarts and pies, and coming to the belief that the subtleties of law were rascalities under the cloak of learning, he abandoned them for literature and science. He managed to keep body and soul together on a guinea a week by translating English articles for a paper published at Boulogne, but in 1780, at twenty-six years of age, he achieved the audacious feat of writing a 'Theory of Criminal Law' in two volumes. This was followed by a still more stupendous work, in ten volumes, under the title of a 'Philosophical Library of Criminal Laws.' In a part of this work he revealed his intellectual audacity by discussing the ethics of cannibalism: 'May men nourish themselves on their species?' he asked with an air of 'philosophical gravity,' and he answered the question by announcing that 'a single word may decide this question. Human beings have the right to nourish themselves from any substance suitable for the satisfaction of their needs.' Having achieved this remarkable *jeu d'esprit*, Brissot betook himself to London and became partner in a revolutionary publishing business for the manufacture of lampoons against the Court of France. He was in England for nearly two years, and upon his return to France was promptly clapped into the Bastille. His imprisonment, however, was a short one, and he was liberated at the end of two months. Being extremely short of funds, he negotiated a loan which subsequently was the means of ruining his reputation and helped to bring him to the block. He borrowed some fifteen thousand francs from a man named Desforges for the nominal purpose of founding a lyceum in London. Unfortunately, the painful necessity of eating, drinking, dressing, and lodging made a great hole in this borrowed treasure, and the light-hearted adventurer

was unable to pay back the money. Desforges seems to have been a man of unusual generosity and did not press his friend too harshly, but the enemies of the Girondins, nosing out the transaction, made excellent capital of the affair. Camille Desmoulins, in his famous 'History of the Brissotins,' was cruelly witty in his use of these facts and invented the new infinitive of *brissoter* as a synonym for the verb *to steal*. This, however, was some six years later, and meanwhile Brissot was befriended by Madame de Genlis, the governess of the Duc d'Orléans's children, and the enemy of the Duchess, against whom she intrigued so treacherously; and though she considered him as 'a man without talent and with no fortune,' she was persuaded to use her influence to further his suit with one of the ladies-in-waiting at the Palais Royal. Brissot, thanks to this influence, obtained the hand of the woman he loved, and soon afterwards, on the strength of his wife's *dot*, went off to the United States to study a republic in being. He had not been there very long when the news of the Revolution brought him back in all haste to France, and from that time he was absorbed in politics. He quickly obtained renown by establishing a revolutionary journal called the 'Patriote français,' and by formulating a new plan of organisation for the municipality of Paris. Afterwards he became a member of the Legislative Assembly and the leader of the moderate party of 'the Plain.' Like all the Girondins, he defended the monarchy against the extreme revolutionists until the excesses of the people and the triumph of the Jacobins made it impossible to save the King. He then endeavoured to explain away the many speeches in which he had denounced the idea of a republic and done homage to the virtues and office of Louis XVI. But Danton and Desmoulins, Marat and Robespierre, and the

whole weight of the 'Mountain' fell upon him, and he was destroyed in the cataclysm of his party.

In appearance Brissot was not in any way remarkable. He was short and pale, and his long smooth hair was unpowdered. But a wonderful reserve of energy, an unruffled amiability, and a keen and subtle intelligence lifted him above the commonplace and marked him out as a leader. During the last year of his life, when the hostility of the Jacobins became most deadly, he fell into a melancholy and bitterness which damaged his reputation and his party, and he showed a fatal weakness of principles and character when he was examined before the revolutionary tribunal. But he died with quiet dignity and courage, and still lives in the memory of history as one of the most attractive of the Girondins.

Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, another *habitué* at the salon of Madame Roland, was a man of a very different stamp of character. Brissot's philosophy was based upon the ingenious theories of a keen imagination, without real knowledge of the subjects he dealt with; but Condorcet was a scholar who from his childhood had breathed an atmosphere of learning, and had been nourished on abstract science. Brissot was a plebeian by birth and a member of the academy of human nature. Condorcet, on the other hand, was born of an aristocratic family, educated under clerical and class influence, and distinguished as the driest pedant of the Academy of France. Having won high honours at the Jesuit College of Rheims and afterwards at the clerical College of Navarre at Paris, he obtained his seat in the Academy by his 'Essai sur le Calcul Intégral.' In spite of, or rather because of, the stifling atmosphere of aristocratic and theological dogma in which he had been reared, he revolted as a young man from the old traditions and became a liberal of the most pronounced kind. D'Alembert made him one of

the contributors to the 'Encyclopædia,' and upon the eve of the Revolution his pen achieved a prodigious amount of work in the way of pamphlets and political tracts appealing to the popular side of the great struggle. In 1791 he was elected as a representative of Paris to the Legislative Assembly, and in the following year became its president. More extreme in his views than many of the Girondins, though always timid and pedantic in manner, he was consistent to his republican ideals to the end. Yet, unlike other Girondins who, really more royalist in their leanings, were coerced by fear in voting for the death of the King, Condorcet voted for any punishment except death itself.

Upon the downfall of his party Condorcet fled to the house of a lady named Madame Vernet, who kept him in hiding, and there he wrote his greatest work, the 'Progrès de l'Esprit Humain.' In this work, penned at a time when his spirit and his faith in humanity might well have been crushed by the terrors through which he had passed, he maintained the optimistic philosophy of the infinite capability of human progress, and, far in advance of his time and of ours, pleaded for the equal rights of political and civil expression for women as for men. Condorcet's weakness lay in his scholasticism and his failure to understand human nature as it is. He came from the quiet atmosphere of the Academy into the rude and noisy world, and he was like a moth that has flitted into the fierce sunshine of a city street. Madame Roland, although his hostess, saw with her quick and worldly eyes the inherent weakness of the man, and the portrait of him in her 'Memoirs' is candid and a little cruel.

'One must say a few words about Condorcet,' she writes, 'whose intellect will always be on a level with the great verities of life, but whose character will never rise above fear. One may say of his intelligence in relation to his personality

that it is a fine *liqueur* soaked in cotton wool. One cannot apply to him the phrase that "in a feeble body he shows great courage"; he is as feeble in heart as in health. The timidity which characterises him, and which he carries even into society on his face and in his attitude, is not only a vice of temperament; it seems inherent in his soul, and the light of his learning does not give him any means of mastering it. Thus, after having successfully decided such and such a principle, and demonstrated such and such a truth, he gives his opinion in the Assembly in precisely the opposite sense when it was a question of rising in the presence of uproarious tribunes armed with insults and prodigal of threats. He was in his place as secretary of the Academy. One should leave such men to write, and never employ them.'

The name of Barbaroux, which comes next on the visiting list of Madame Roland, stands out from the rest of his party in all the glamour of romance. Born at Marseilles, a Southerner, with the hot temperament and the vivid imagination of his people, his enthusiasm for liberty was sincere, and his quick eloquence came welling from a generous heart. It has been often said that no nobler head than his fell in the Reign of Terror, and yet even the pardonable faults of youthful impetuosity may not excuse his share in that fatal and foolish plot which brought the Marseillais to Paris before August 10 and enlisted the aid of these ferocious cut-throats to overawe the Court which had ousted the Girondin Ministry from power. Much sentiment has surrounded the character of Barbaroux, because he was young and beautiful in youthful manhood. And it is natural enough, for, after all, the violence and the indiscretions of a handsome youth will always be more easily forgiven than those of withered and ugly old age. Marat, with his bony and repulsive face, is still the black bogey of the Revolution, whereas Camille Desmoulins, who

was not a whit more gentle in his methods until his tardy repentance of the Terror, is still regarded as an amiable and heroic figure. So Barbaroux, 'of whom,' says Madame Roland, 'painters would not disdain to copy the features for a head of Antinous, active, frank and brave, with the vivacity of a young Marseillais,' is forgiven his faults for the sake of his romantic personality. And truly there is a flash of sunshine when he appears upon the scene, the sunshine of youth and strength and fresh enthusiasm.

He certainly stands in agreeable contrast to Pétion de Villeneuve, whom Madame Roland, however, did not find so vulgar as others have depicted him.

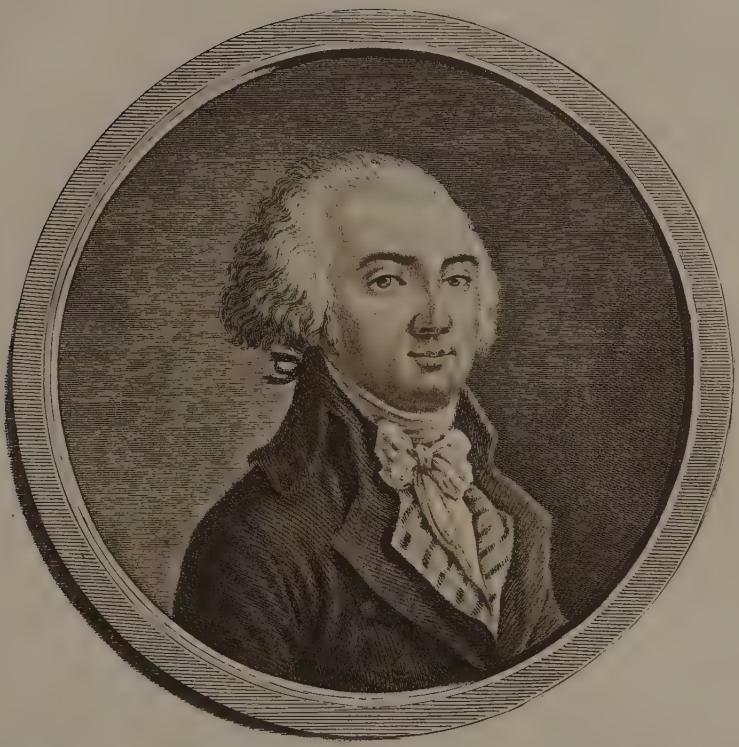
Bertrand de Molleville, the royalist, has left a portrait of him which, though not flattering, is in agreement with other contemporary descriptions:

'His physiognomy, which at first sight appeared open and agreeable, was dull and without expression. His lack of education, his ponderous style of speech, by turns trivial and pretentious, made me look upon him as a man not likely to be dangerous, and I even imagined that by flattering his vanity and his ambition one might make him useful to the King. His conduct has only proved too well how much I was mistaken, and to-day I cannot remember without a disagreeable feeling how I let myself be imposed upon by such a pestilent rascal.'

Pétion was indeed a coarse and low-minded fellow, ludicrously vain, and with the cowardice of the bully and the brute. His principles were governed only by ambition. Beginning as a royalist, he became a republican because he went with the tide of popular violence. As mayor of Paris he stood by deliberately without hindering the sack of the Tuileries and the massacres of September, and although he had posed as a defender of the monarchical constitution, he

voted for the King's death. As president of the National Convention he aspired to the dictatorship, and covered himself with ridicule even from his own friends by the vanity with which he received the popular homage. For a time he had been closely allied to Robespierre 'the incorruptible' under the nickname of Pétion 'the virtuous.' But his former friend wounded him to the quick by piercing the armour of his self-conceit, and there can be no doubt also that he broke with Robespierre because he believed that the latter stood in the way of his ambitions. From that time he allied himself with the Girondin party, and thus, with his personal attack upon Robespierre, sealed his doom.

Madame Roland's estimate of Pétion is curiously charitable, considering how strongly she has condemned in her 'Memoirs' the atrocities of the mob and the violence of the extremists, in both of which Pétion de Villeneuve is severely implicated. 'Pétion,' she says, 'is truly a good and well-meaning fellow; he is incapable of doing the least thing hurtful to the rules of honesty, nor the least wrong, nor the smallest grief to anybody. The serenity of a good conscience, the sweetness of an easy temperament, and both frankness and gaiety distinguish his physiognomy. He was a prudent mayor, a faithful representative; but he is too confident and too peaceful to foresee storms and to dispel them. He was a bold orator but timid in his style, as an historian is. A just administrator and good citizen, he was born to practise virtues in a republic, and not to found such a government among a corrupted people.' This estimate of the man, so utterly at variance with every historical detail of his life, and with such grossness and brutality, for instance, as he showed in the King's carriage on the return from Varennes, and with the treachery of his conduct at the Tuileries before the attack on August 10, inexcusable, whatever political



Duplessis-Bertaux

JÉROME PÉTION

views may be held, reveals how little trust may be placed in the literary portraits of Madame Roland.

But her partiality is changed into real passion when she writes about that other Girondin, Buzot, the deputy from the Department of Eure. It is here that we get a glimpse into the innermost heart of that remarkable woman, who in some ways seemed a little heartless and unwomanly. To the student of that epoch of French history a familiarity with the social morals of the time accustoms him to the looseness of the marriage bond and to the very usual *ménage à trois*, so that it is not so extraordinary that Madame Roland should have enjoyed the love of a man other than her husband, but rather that she should have been irreproachable in her married relations. For, reflect, she was a young and warm-blooded woman, by her own confession of sensuous instincts and imagination, yet married to a man of cold pedantic temperament, withered at the heart, and prematurely old. She was surrounded by men attracted by her wit, her strong intelligence, and her charms of person, men not too scrupulous, some of them, and in an excited condition of mind, with death always at their elbows, when the transient joys of the world are most alluring for the sake of a little forgetfulness, at least. But Madame Roland was austere in her virtue, and even from her enemies there has never been an accusation of infidelity to the elderly man whose work and ambitions she shared. In her 'Memoirs,' however, with a momentary candour of self-revelation which perhaps she repented of later, for she does not pursue the theme, she alludes to a secret trouble of her heart. 'I seem to see,' she says, 'that those who read this will ask if so tender a heart, so touching a sensibility, have not been moved by more real things; and if, after having so often dreamed of happiness, I have not realised it in a passion useful to some

one else.' In another place she says, 'I only see pleasure and happiness in a partnership that may charm the heart as well as the senses. . . . Rousseau showed me the domestic happiness to which I might aspire, and the ineffable delights which I was capable of tasting. Ah! if he succeeded in securing me from what is called weakness, could he safeguard me against a *passion*!' The words are vague, but it is generally believed that they referred to her devotion for Buzot, whose portrait she wore upon her breast in prison, and whose portrait alone in the gallery of her 'Memoirs' she describes with the passionate enthusiasm of a woman whose heart has been deeply stirred.

'Buzot,' she writes, 'with his exalted character, his proud spirit and fiery courage, sensitive, ardent, melancholy, and indolent, must sometimes be carried away by extremes. Passionate observer of nature, feeding his imagination with all the charms that it may offer, his soul with principles of the most moving philosophy, he seems made to taste and obtain domestic happiness; he would forget the whole world in the sweetness of private virtues, with some heart worthy of his own. But, plunged into public life, he only knows the laws of austere justice. A friend of humanity, susceptible of the most tender affections, capable of sublime impulses and of the most generous resolutions, he cherishes his kind, and knows how to devote himself as a republican; but a severe judge of individuals, a little hard to please in things that win his esteem, he only grants his favours to a very few people. This reserve, coupled with the vehement pride with which he expresses himself, has caused him to be accused of a haughty spirit, and given him enemies. With a noble countenance, an elegant figure, he preserved in his dress that care, that cleanliness, that decency which proclaims the spirit of order, the taste and sentiment for the amenities of

life, and the respect of the worthy man for the public and himself.'

It was to Buzot that she wrote her last letters from prison, and it was, at least nominally, for the purposes of accusation, because she had expressed sympathy with him while he was trying to raise an insurrection in the south, that she was considered guilty of treason and condemned to death.

Of other distinguished Girondins, such as Vergniaud, Louvet, Lanjuinais, de Sillery, and Isnard, Madame Roland has not much to say, and we may therefore assume that they were not habitués of her salon.

Isnard, like Barbaroux, was a man of violent temperament and extreme views, and it is curious indeed that he should have been allied to the Girondins at all. He came from the arid district of the Rhone, and there was a dry, fierce heat in his eloquence that scorched his enemies and tortured them. It was he who denounced the *émigrés* as open traitors to the nation, demanding, with his eyes glaring at Robespierre, who, with his abstract theories of liberty, defended their right to leave France, 'whether anyone will maintain that these men are not plotting against their nation,' and threatening them with 'the punishments of the people that resemble the punishments of God, since they work when the laws are silent.'

It is a pity that Madame Roland has not left us her impressions of Lanjuinais, quite the boldest and the bravest of the party. When nearly all the Girondins had been cowed by the ferocity of the 'Mountain,' flying secretly from Paris or absenting themselves from the Convention and letting Terror have its way, he stood alone or almost alone at his post, and fought the battle of moderation single-handed against the men of anarchy and blood. It was with a really heroic courage that he defended his party in

that great scene when amidst angry shouts from the 'Mountain' he threw scorn upon the petitions of massacre dragged through the mud of Paris streets and exposed the plots of the Commune and the Revolutionary Committee for annihilating the Girondins—the truest patriots of the nation. It was then that Legendre, the great butcher from the Faubourg St. Antoine, swung his brawny arms, and with an oath at Lanjuinais said, 'Get down or I will fell you;' and then that Lanjuinais uttered his famous repartee, 'Pass a law to declare me an ox and you may do so.' Fierce hands plucked at him to drag him down, and a pistol was levelled at his chest, but he stood to his post, swaying but erect amidst the tumult, while his clear defiant voice commanded a hearing. Having denounced the enemies of the nation, he appealed to the better instincts of the Convention in a peroration full of noble pleading.

'Suppress,' he said, 'suppress without delay, every authority which the laws do not recognise; forbid the people to obey them; enforce the national will, and you will see the agitators abandoned by the good citizens whom they lead astray. If you have not the courage to do this, liberty is lost. I see the horrible monster of dictatorship and tyranny stalking over heaps of ruins and corpses, and finally overthrowing the Republic itself.'

He was answered only by jeers and groans, and he could not save his party, nor liberty itself.

And Louvet, he, too, showed a courage too rare among the Girondins, and when all men trembled before the cold cruelty of Robespierre, when he had become the nominal leader and the actual slave of the Terrorists, Louvet threw down the gauntlet and challenged him. He accused him of calumniating the most virtuous patriots, of offering the basest flatteries to the mob. With impassioned eloquence,

rash and heroic at such a time, he described Robespierre's intrigues, his ambition, his unscrupulous ascendency over the people, and stretching out his right arm to the pale figure of his enemy, whose eyes glowed with anger through his spectacles, he ended his oration with the final charge, ' Robespierre, I accuse thee ! '

Well would it have been for the Girondins if Vergniaud, the most eloquent man of his party, had had the courage of Louvet and Lanjuinais. He seemed a strong man and born to leadership. His personality was impressive and commanding. With his big nose and thick lips, his bushy eyebrows and pale pock-marked face, his broad high forehead, bright black eyes, and thick hair frizzed and powdered, he bore a remarkable likeness to the great Mirabeau. But he had a fatal indolence and fatal weakness. He was too fond of leisure and the genial ease of life to hold the helm of a ship that was steering between sharp-edged rocks. And his eloquence, grand and thunderous, or winning and seductive, as he could always command his inexhaustible words, could not hold together his followers when he neglected his duties day after day for the sake of his private and domestic comforts.

This carelessness and indolence were characteristic of the man's whole career, and were partly inherited, we may believe. His father was a merchant at Limoges who failed in business and was content with bankruptcy. Pierre Victurnien Vergniaud, his son, attracted the attention of Turgot, the Intendant of the Limousin, and afterwards the great Finance Minister of France, who nominated him to a scholarship at the Collège du Plessis at Paris. He studied divinity for a time with an easy indifference, and then abandoned it through sheer boredom. Then he obtained a post in the Civil Service, but wearied of that also, and

went back to his bankrupt father to enjoy the lotus fruits of idleness. Some time later, through the generosity of a brother-in-law, he settled down as an advocate at Bordeaux, and there succeeded brilliantly in a profession where his natural eloquence found its scope. But when the States-General were summoned he threw up his practice and plunged into politics, succeeding in getting himself elected as a deputy. As the Revolution progressed he became the leader of the Girondin party until events were too strong for him. He had no genius for intrigue, no real taste for statesmanship, and his whole force lay in the power of words. That is a great and sometimes an irresistible power, as it was with Robespierre, but Vergniaud had not the subtlety nor the foresight of Robespierre, and by words alone he could not hold his place.

In the Convention he was in favour of an appeal to the people on the question of the King's punishment, but at the decisive moment, when the Convention was surrounded by an armed mob, and when the power of the 'Mountain' was revealed, his heart faltered and he voted for death. It was his tragic fate, as president of the Convention, to announce the result of the votes, and the words nearly choked him as he uttered the dread sentence. When the 'Mountain' followed up their triumph by their fierce and irresistible onslaught on the Girondins, he rallied a little energy to defend his party, but eloquent though he was his words were ineffective by their vagueness, and his weakness was apparent.

We see both this eloquence and this timidity in the great speech which he rose to make on March 13, 1793.

'There was once a tyrant,' he said, 'who had all the victims of his fury laid upon an iron bed, and who, by screwing up the tall ones and stretching the short ones, brought

them all to the length of his terrible couch. My friends, this tyrant was also a lover of equality, and it is such equality as this which is too often imposed upon us.

'Citizens, there is reason to fear that this Revolution, devouring all its children like Saturn, may end by giving birth to despots.'

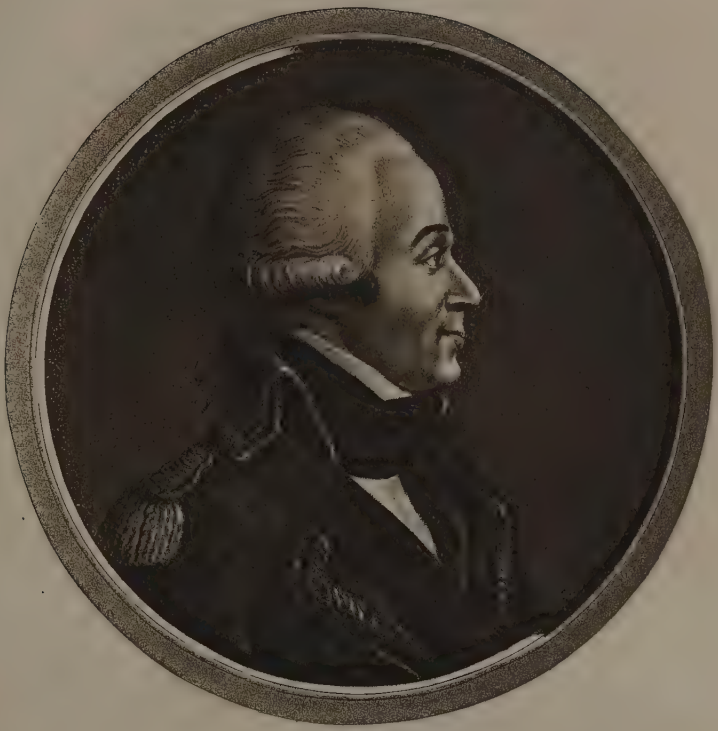
This was a veiled, though to everyone in the Convention a clear, denunciation of the 'Mountain,' and so far he showed courage, but he weakened his arguments, and showed both insincerity and timidity when he went on to ascribe all the blame of the plots against the party of order in the Convention to the secret intrigues of William Pitt, as the enemy of France, and to the aristocrat *émigrés*. Louvet, who had boldly challenged Robespierre by name, was furious at this display of the white feather, and demanded angrily of Vergniaud why he had not accused the real authors of the plots instead of vamping up imaginary bogies.

'*Mon ami*,' said Vergniaud, frankly confessing his cowardice, 'I thought it best to denounce the conspiracy without naming the true conspirators, for fear of incensing such as are too prone to indulge in every kind of excess.'

He was afraid of his head. That was the true cause of his reticence, but he might well have known that against the 'Mountain' a veiled accusation was just as dangerous as an open challenge. He gained nothing but contempt for his caution, and lost his head with those who had played a bolder game. Yet he was a gentleman, this Vergniaud, a man of fine suavity, and with a nice code of honour. He had a lofty soul above the meanness of intrigues and the baser passions. He was really a patriot, desiring the welfare of his nation, and untainted by the vulgarity of ambition. He was out of his element among the coarser men of his party like Pétion and Barbaroux, and the fiery Isnard,

and the easy-going Brissot, who was something of the adventurer. It was his gentlemanly instincts and natural refinement of manner which put him out of touch with his party, who, though they posed as idealists, had some strains of plebeian wildness and the petty passions of the *bourgeoisie*.

Dumouriez, who was his friend and went with him sometimes to the salon of the Rolands at the Home Office, was, however, the most singular, and in many ways the strongest man who belonged to 'the drawing-room clique' of which Marat wrote so scoffingly. It was the chance opportunity of ambition which made this soldier a Girondin, and in his nature there was nothing which allied him to the party of philosophers and middle-class revolutionists. He was a man who would have done well, indeed who had done well, as an officer of brigade under the old *régime*, and who, if he could only have pulled through the Revolution without irretrievable damage, would have fought gallantly and gone far with the eagles of Napoleon. He had no revolutionary convictions founded on philosophy. He believed in the sword and the flag, and in the stern discipline of the military profession. Give him an army and an enemy, and he would do his plain duty with admirable courage and efficiency. As a young man he had fought through the Seven Years' War, winning a reputation as a dashing leader of cavalry. Then after some roving about the world he became a *protége* of the Duc de Choiseul, the once all-powerful Minister of Louis the Well-beloved, obtaining a post as quartermaster-general. Upon the fall of Choiseul he learnt the miseries of solitude as a prisoner in the Bastille, but Louis XVI. liberated him and he became commandant of Cherbourg. At the outbreak of the Revolution he naturally beheld the downfall of his former prison with a sense of personal pleasure, and threw in his lot with the popular party. For a time



Dupleux-Bertaux

DUMOURIEZ

he was a professed Jacobin, believing, no doubt, that this was the way of ambition. But when he saw the forces of reaction sweeping onwards, and the constitutional party of the Girondins in the ascendant, he abandoned the Jacobin Club, and went with Brissot, Vergniaud, and their friends to the 'boudoir,' which seemed, and was to some extent, the council-chamber in which the destinies of France were decided.

In his heart, however, this soldier of fortune had nothing but contempt for the literary gentlemen who discussed their portfolios before the rather vulgar and very audacious lady who was so free with her advice. One can imagine him, this big, red-faced, sabre-scarred soldier with the dark, steel-shot hair and heavy eyes, tapping his fingers in a military tattoo as he listened to the abstract philosophising of the nervous Condorcet, to the dry pedantry of Roland, to the loud-voiced enthusiasm of Pétion, to the imposing platitudes of Brissot, and to the mild dignity of Vergniaud. He was hearty with them, and laughed with the jollity of an old campaigner, and pretended to agree with their ideals and ambitions, and endeavoured to understand their classical allusions, but all the time he was thinking, perhaps, what poor fighting men these were, what fellows for mere talk, and wondering how long it would be before he sat on a big, strong horse, and with a sabre in his hand led a squadron of cavalry into the thunder of a charge. He was a soldier and would rule by the sword. He had no taste nor genius for the shuffling of politics and the secrecy of an intrigue. He had no republican instinct either, but believed rather in keeping the people to heel and making them obey by sound of drum. If he had been greater than he was, more devoted to the principles of Revolution, and with state-craft as well as military genius, he might have stolen a march on Napoleon and become the first Emperor of the French.

His office as Minister of Foreign Affairs did not last long. He resigned it gladly enough to go to the front with the ragged regiments, when he and his Girondin colleagues had gained their end in spite of Marat and Robespierre, and forced on the war with Austria. At Valmy he proved his right to wield the sword and to command soldiers who would obey. In that first great battle of the new chapter of the world, which really begins modern history, he led the peasants of the provinces and the ragged ruffians of the city boulevards against the Duke of Brunswick's veteran army, and it is his glory as well as theirs that they were inspired with an heroic endurance which stood the shock of Brunswick's thunderous cannon, and with an enthusiasm which at the end of that day's battle forced the army of invasion backwards in sullen retreat. The news of that battle, when it reached Paris, lifted the heavy gloom of panic from the spirits of the people who had listened to Robespierre's horrid warnings and heard in imagination the tramp of foreign legions marching upon their city with sharpened swords. From the Girondins, above all, who had been responsible for the war, it lifted the weight, not, perhaps, of fear, but at least of dreadful anxiety. Dumouriez had not failed them! They were justified before the people. Two months later Dumouriez triumphed again at Jemappes, in Belgium, when the Austrians were heavily defeated. It seemed then as if the Girondins, who had found this man, were indeed the saviours of the nation, and that the croakings of Marat were but the noisiness of an envious and malignant creature. But the Girondins were not practical administrators, and they failed miserably, both in providing the necessities of war and in keeping up the strength and enthusiasm of the volunteer armies. It was not without justice that they were accused of incom-

petence, and it was not a little their own fault that this accusation changed soon into the more terrible one of treason. The 'Mountain' became more threatening, and they were losing their hold on the King. Then they were turned out of office by the King and plunged into the mad plot of a popular rising which should subdue the Court and give them the power of the people by which they might crush the leaders of the Jacobins. We know their failure and how the success of the insurrection and the sack of the Tuileries led to their own downfall by still further strengthening the 'Mountain.' Robespierre and his colleagues pressed for the trial of the King, and they resisted faintheartedly and could not save him. This, and the failure of their attacks upon Marat and Robespierre, brought them to impotence. The hand of fate was closing upon them. Lafayette, one of their generals, horror-stricken at the King's death, denounced the Jacobins, threatened to march upon the Convention, and finally rode over to the enemy. His treason seemed theirs, for they had nominated him to command. If Dumouriez failed them now! Well might they have sickened at the thought. If that happened, nothing could save them. Already Dumouriez had aroused the suspicion and hatred of the Jacobins. That scene at Talma's, when Marat had come as the unbidden guest one evening when Dumouriez had paid a flying visit to Paris; those sullen suspicious words with which the People's Friend had dared to cross-question the general upon his conduct to his soldiers, had been ominous and disconcerting. If Dumouriez should fail them! It was a terrible doubt, and one speedily changed into a more terrible certainty. The news of his defeat at Neerwinden came as the news of death to the Girondins themselves. His defeat had been too easy. He had allowed himself to be beaten, and evidence was forthcoming that

he was parleying with the enemy. Still more appalling news was brought on the swift tongue of rumour. Dumouriez had dared to arrest and imprison the four commissioners sent with orders from the Convention. It was believed that he had threatened to march on Paris, as Lafayette had threatened.

When these things were known in Paris rage and terror took possession of the people, and in the Convention 'treason' was the watchword. They declared their sittings permanent, and decreed that every Frenchman who recognised Dumouriez as a general should be looked upon as a traitor and condemned to death, and that his property should be confiscated by the Republic. The Convention then made Dumouriez an outlaw, and authorised any citizen to run him down. Finally a reward of 300,000 francs was offered to whomsoever should bring him to Paris, dead or alive.

Dumouriez's treachery failed miserably. Loathing Robespierre and all his works, he had been gradually warped from loyalty to a revolution which never had given him any honest enthusiasm. In his tent during those days he had brooded long and had dreamt waking dreams. What visions had come to him then we do not know, and can hardly guess. Perhaps he saw himself leading the men who had fought with him at Valmy and Jemappes back to the city of horrors where, as a French Cromwell, he would sweep the Convention clean and restore order with an iron hand. Perhaps he was seduced by another vision, and saw himself as a General Monk, taking advantage of a reaction against rulers more stern and terrible than those who had preceded them, bringing about a Restoration and presenting a new king to a grateful people. We cannot tell the motives at the heart of this man. The treason of a brave man is always inexplicable. But we know that he tried to tempt his soldiers to desert over

to the enemy, that one and all they refused, threatening him with fierce indignation, and that then, to save his head, he rode swiftly and shamefully across to the Austrian camp.

Dumouriez did save his head and lived in foreign countries through the Terror and through the reaction, through the Napoleonic triumphs and through the glories of the Empire, on through the years of Napoleon's downfall and final defeat on the field of Waterloo, on still through the long and dreary years of exile, to die at last, a worn-out old man, of dreadful memories and cankered heart, at a park near our Henley-on-Thames, in the year 1823.

It was the war, and the treason of Dumouriez which arose from the war, that chiefly caused the downfall of the Girondins. Yet there were many other causes, and among these the hostility of the moderate men against Marat and Robespierre. It was not wholly a hatred of violence which inspired this antagonism. Robespierre was seldom the open advocate of insurrection, until it was accomplished, whereas the Girondins themselves had more to do with the popular outbreaks of July 31 and August 10 than either Robespierre or Marat. It was rather a personal loathing of Marat as the enemy of the *bourgeoisie*, of which class they were the representatives and the champions, and of Robespierre as the stern critic of their military policy, and as the self-constituted symbol of the revolutionary ideal. Much as they hated Marat, they hated Robespierre more because his pose was more dangerous to their own supremacy. Although they suffered a heavy defeat when they impeached Marat, and when he was triumphantly acquitted by popular verdict, his assassination rid them of this enemy in a most convenient way. But Robespierre lived, and as his power increased they saw that with him they must wage a death-struggle or fall. The Girondins, much as they differed in

temperament and principles, were united in this common hostility to the 'Incorruptible,' and each of them took his turn in the attack. Brissot called him a 'demagogue,' and Barbaroux first spoke the word 'dictator.' Buzot asked 'if they were the slaves of the members of Paris.' Brissot again scoffed at his influence, and asked point-blank, 'What have you done? What are you in the Revolution?' Louvet, before his great denunciation, accused him of royalism, a ridiculous charge in a ridiculous pamphlet called 'Robespierre and his Royalists,' circulated by Roland at the public expense. Gorsas made the strangest accusation. 'With my own ears,' he said, 'I have heard Robespierre talking of God to a crowd.' It does not seem a very deadly crime to us, but in those days of revolution, to be pious, to preach, to play the priest, savoured too much of the old 'superstitions' to find favour among friends of liberty. Condorcet, the philosopher and Encyclopædist, elaborates this argument against Robespierre. 'There are some,' he said, 'who ask why there are always so many women hanging round Robespierre; at his house, in the galleries of the Jacobins and of the Convention. It is because this Revolution of ours is a Religion, and Robespierre is leading a sect therein. He is a priest at the head of his worshippers. . . . Robespierre preaches; Robespierre censures; he is furious, grave, melancholy, exalted—all coldly; his thoughts flow regularly, his habits are regular; he thunders against the rich and the great; he lives on next to nothing; he has no necessities. He has but one mission—to speak, and he speaks unceasingly; he creates disciples . . . he has every character, not of the maker of a religion, but of the originator of an opinion; he has an ascetic reputation about him . . . he talks of God, of Providence; he calls himself the friend of the humble and the weak; he gets himself followed by women, and by the

poor in spirit; he gravely receives their adoration. . . . He is a priest, and will never be other than a priest. . . .'

None of these words were forgotten by Robespierre. He stored them up in his brain, cataloguing them against the names of those who had spoken them, for future reference and revenge. They added to his glory and to his self-importance, for this unanimity of attack from the Girondins against one man was an acknowledgement of his power. It lifted him even above the 'Mountain' itself, and the Jacobins, when they fell at last upon the Girondins, were defending not themselves but their leader.

The first defeat of the Girondins came, however, as we have seen, not from their enemies in the Convention but from the Court. In order to obtain a stronger hold on Paris they determined to establish an armed camp of 20,000 men under the walls of the city as a menace to the Court and a terrorising influence upon the Jacobins and the people. The King, whose consent was demanded for this project, presented to him by Roland, the Home Secretary, and Servan, the Minister of War, refused it emphatically, and with an astonishing decision dismissed the Girondin ministry. It was then, in the first shock of this defeat, that in desperation and rage the men who had called themselves 'moderate' resolved to call to their aid the Federal Volunteers of the South, who though they came from many towns and villages were afterwards grouped under the famous name of the Marseillais.

'It was during July,' said Madame Roland, 'that seeing things go from bad to worse, owing to the perfidy of the Court, we began to look about for a refuge for our threatened liberty. We often spoke, with Barbaroux and Servan, of the excellent spirit of the South and of the facilities offered by this locality for the foundation of a Republic should the

triumphant Court succeed in overpowering the North and Paris. We took out some maps and traced a border line thereon.

'This shall be our resource,' said Barbaroux, 'if the Marseillais that I accompanied here are not seconded by the Parisians sufficiently to overthrow the Court. However, I hope that they will succeed and that we shall secure a Convention which will give a republic to all France.'

In these secret councils at the Home Office it was decided to disregard the veto of the King and to bring the Marseillais to Paris. Barbaroux himself accompanied the first battalions of those wild ruffians who came shouting the song of Rouget de l'Isle. No special pleading therefore may disprove the complicity of the Girondins in the plot which began with the invasion of the Tuileries on July 31 and ended with the sack of the palace and the hideous atrocities of August 10. In justice to most of the Girondins it must be said that they had not foreseen that horrible carnival of blood, and that they loathed the massacre for which they were in part responsible. But Pétion was a Girondin, and he, at least, was guilty of all but the actual work of cutting throats. As mayor of Paris he was responsible for the dispersal of armed mobs, and for the defence of the Tuileries and the city. As mayor of Paris it was his duty to call out the municipal troops at the first signs of insurrection, and to apprise the Court of any threatened danger. But he did none of these things, though every detail of the preparations was known to him. He lied to the King and Queen, assuring them that no danger was on foot, and he went deliberately to bed when the massacres began, and when they had finished he defended them boldly before the Convention. Pétion, 'the good fellow' of Madame Roland, was as guilty of those deeds on August 10 as Danton and Desmoulins, and he had

less excuse than these because he was allied to a party which had posed as the defenders of the law and of the established constitution.

It was a terrible retribution that fell upon the heads of the Girondins for their complicity in crime. The imprisonment of the King and the violence of the mob gave the reins of power into the hands of the Jacobins, who used them to throttle their old enemies. Not long was it before Dumouriez's treason gave them their opportunity of revenge. The Girondins were accused of sharing this treason. On April 19, 1793, seals were placed upon Roland's papers by the Committee of Vigilance, and he escaped arrest only by instant flight, leaving Madame Roland in the hands of his enemies, who dragged her to the Abbaye. Then the Commune of Paris organised another insurrection, directed this time against the Convention. Surrounded by armed men and the guns of the municipal forces, all the Girondins who had not already fled were caught in a trap. Robespierre's hour had come, and twenty-two of the leading Girondins were voted under arrest. They were allowed to remain in their own houses, under the guard of a municipal gendarme, and it seemed as if Robespierre, satisfied with a moral victory, deliberately allowed them a loophole of escape. Some of them took the opportunity and fled, but the others were held back by pride and remained to face their fate.

The Girondins were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal on October 24, 1793, and their trial ended on the 30th of the month. There were twenty-one of the accused, not twenty-two as generally stated, and the following is a list of their names : Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Duperret, Carra, Gardien, Valazé, Duprat, Sillery, Fauchet, Ducos, Fonfrède, Lehardy, Boileau, La Source, Beauvais, Duchâtel,

Mainvielle, Lacaze, Antiboul, and Vigée. The chief charges against them were of having organised a force to oppress the city of Paris, of having resisted the insurrection of May 31, when the Convention was surrounded by the armed forces of the Commune, and of having been the enemies of the 'Mountain.'

In these last days of their lives the Girondins did not rise to the nobility which might have been expected from men who, with all their faults, were on a higher plane of morality than the leaders of the mob. They were young men, most of them. Only the Marquis de Sillery, the husband of Madame de Genlis, was over forty years of age. Vergniaud was just that age, but the others were all men in the prime of early manhood. It is natural that, with the sap of life still so vigorous in them, death should have been very terrible. They, like Camille Desmoulins, their enemy, who afterwards shirked his doom with bitter anguish, had many ties binding them to the pleasant world. Brissot thought of the good wife who had mended his shirts with love in every stitch, and who would now water them with salt, sad tears. Others among these men had wives and little children and pleasant homes tugging at their heart-strings and making cowards of them. And they had been so confident of victory, so exultant in their work of liberty, that their downfall was hard to bear and difficult to believe. Surely they could not be condemned to die, they who had been true patriots, unselfish in their services to the nation! For the sake of France they must shuffle somehow from this snare of death, baffling the vengeance of their enemies by quick wit, by meeting them half-way, by thrusting their imaginary crimes upon absent shoulders who would not feel the burden.

And so these men forgot their dignity a little and strained their honour. They tried to shift their responsibility of

action upon Barbaroux and Pétion, and even upon the timid Condorcet; upon any of the Girondins who had already fled before the storm. Alas! they even accused and denied each other, following the example of Peter. Vergniaud protested that he had never been intimate with Gensonné and Brissot. The Marquis de Sillery denied having relations with Pétion, and faltered miserably when he was confronted with the fact that he had entrusted his wife to Brissot's care when the latter had crossed to England. Vigée swore that he had never known any of the Girondins in a private way, and Boileau, repudiating the principles of the moderate party, declared himself to be a Montagnard out and out. Even Vergniaud, fine gentleman and man of honour as he had always been, hating the violence of the 'Mountain' with the loathing of a sensitive and delicate nature for the brutalities of revolution, tried to explain away his former words which, in the days of his power, he had launched at Marat: 'a man absolutely disgusting in his calumnies, his gall, and lust of blood.' 'I am reproached with having declaimed against Marat,' he stammered. 'I have only spoken once against him; when the shopkeepers were pillaged and a decree of accusation was demanded against Marat, I opposed it.' And so for four days the wretched Girondins wrangled and pleaded with Fouquier-Tinville, who probed their words with his cold, sharp voice, torturing them upon the keen edge of his cross-examination. Outside, in Paris, their enemies were becoming impatient at this tedious trial. 'Why are the brave judges of the Tribunal fooling about?' asked Hébert. 'Are so many ceremonies required to cut short the villains whom the people have already tried?' Then Robespierre, who was impatient also with this protracted trial, passed the dreadful decree which is certainly the most shameful thing in his career. 'When,' he determined,

'a trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal has lasted for more than three days, the President of the Tribunal shall be bound, at the opening of the following sitting, to ask the jury whether they have heard sufficient evidence. If the jury reply that they have heard sufficient evidence, judgment can be immediately pronounced.'

And so any evidence that might have been brought forward in favour of the accused was left unheard, and the sentence of death was passed upon them. Immediately all the fear that had made cowards of them when there was still a chance of life departed from them now that death was certain, and these men, who had been so weak and unheroic during their trial, became invested with the dignity and courage of martyrdom. The Marquis de Sillery, who had been in torture from gout, threw away his crutch and in a loud voice cried out, 'My sentence gives me back all my strength.' Vergniaud and Brissot heard their condemnation unflinchingly, and with a serenity of face that proved their philosophy. Only one man among them yielded to despair. A groan resounded from the benches where they sat, and a dark stream of blood oozed upon the floor. It was Dufriche Valazé, who had stabbed himself to the heart. 'I am dying,' he gasped out feebly as his comrades shrank from him in horror, and in a moment he lay still and stiff. Fouquier-Tinville was indignant at this robbery of the guillotine, and in a harsh voice declared his intention of having the corpse beheaded. Then he ordered the court to be cleared, and the Girondins were taken to their cells to spend their last night on earth.

Their execution took place on October 31. Rain was coming down in torrents, but a great concourse lined the streets to watch the passing of the men who had been so recently the heroes of the nation. The Girondins were bare-

headed, and in their shirt-sleeves, with their hands tied behind their backs, but on account of the weather their gaolers had thrown coats over their shoulders. Behind them came the corpse of Valazé, with its face uncovered. In the descriptions of eye-witnesses it is said that Brissot and Fauchet seemed profoundly sad, but the others gazed about them with a courageous and contemptuous air. Ducos was quite jocular, and made merry quips with death. 'Mon Dieu!' he cried, 'it is high time for the Convention to proclaim the indivisibility of the body!' Vergniaud, with his large-featured face and powdered hair, strangely reminiscent of the dead Mirabeau, looked down upon the people with cold and disdainful eyes.

When the carts drove into the Place de la Révolution, and the doomed men were ordered to get down, Fonfrède and Ducos embraced each other, and the others followed this example. The Marquis de Sillery was the first to ascend the scaffold, and as he walked with a soldierly step towards the knife, he saluted the people to right and left with an air of splendid dignity. Then from the foot of the scaffold there rose into the air, above the dull thunder of the drums, the solemn strains of the well-known hymn of liberty:

'Liberté, Liberté, que tout mortel te rende homage!
Tyrans, tremblez, vous allez expier vos forfaits!
Plutôt la mort que l'esclavage,
C'est la devise des Français.'

One may well believe that the blood of the spectators thrilled at this chorus sung from the throats of men bared for the knife. Surely, also, some among that crowd must have thrilled with horror and shame when that song of liberty rose to the sky accusing the tyranny which had sentenced such good patriots to death.

One by one the Girondins trod the steps of the scaffold, until at last only one stood singing the hymn of revolution. That was Vigée, and with a shout of '*Vive la République!*' he, too, fell beneath the fatal blade.

We have seen how, after her husband's arrest and escape, Madame Roland was seized and carried to the Abbaye. On account of an informality in the police instructions she was liberated for two days, only to be re-arrested and imprisoned at Sainte-Pélagie. Here for five months she remained in confinement, awaiting the long postponed trial which she knew would end her life when it came.

At first she was lodged in a cell in a long corridor set apart for female criminals. 'There,' she writes, 'under the same roof, and in the same line of cells, I dwell in the midst of murderers, thieves, and harlots. By the side of me is one of those creatures who make a trade of seduction and a traffic of innocence; above me is a forger of assignats, who, with a band of monsters to which she belonged, tore a person of her own sex to pieces upon the highway.' But with wonderful courage and cheerfulness Madame Roland set herself to make the best of her dreadful situation. Her self-consciousness was now a virtue, and she found a sort of pleasure in going through the drama of her martyrdom in a way that would satisfy the ideal she cherished of herself. 'Rising about noon,' she writes of her first day in this prison, 'I considered how I should order my new lodgings. With a white napkin I covered the rude little table, which I moved to the window, where it might serve as a desk; for I made up my mind to take my meals from a corner of the mantelpiece, so that the table might be kept clean and in order for writing. Two large hat-pins, stuck into the boards, answered for a wardrobe. In my pocket I had Thomson's "Seasons," a work which I valued on more than one account;

and I made a list of what other books I wanted. First was Plutarch's "Lives of Illustrious Persons." Lavacquerie (the gaoler), who had never seen his cell occupied by so contented an inmate, and who used to admire the pleasure I took in arranging my books and my flowers, told me that in future he should call it the Pavilion of Flora.'

This gaoler, who seems to have been touched by the courage and cheerfulness of his prisoner, allowed her many privileges not accorded to other inmates, and she was further comforted by the kindly service of a woman named Madame Bouchaud, who attended her with the most devoted service. It was to this good soul that Madame Roland owed her removal from the cold and cheerless cell to a comfortable room on the ground floor, away from the daily obscenities and midnight ravings of the other inmates. Here, with books and flowers, brought to her by a faithful friend named Bosc, she passed peaceful and even happy hours. She was allowed the free use of pens, ink, and paper, and she sat down daily to write her private memoirs. Often, as she wrote, thoughts of the tragedy of her situation, of the downfall of her ambition, of the shattering of her ideals, made salt tears fall upon the paper and blot her words. And at these times expressions of bitter regret and indignation would interrupt the course of her narrative.

'I feel my resolution to pursue these memoirs forsaking me. The miseries of my country torment me; the loss of my friends unnerves me; an involuntary gloom penetrates my soul and chills my imagination. France is become a vast Golgotha of carnage, an arena of horrors, where her children tear and destroy each other.'

But these gloomy thoughts do not dominate her work, the greater part of which is pervaded by all the charm and ease of a woman who, with perfect peace of mind, looks

back upon a happy life. In the solitude of her prison Madame Roland found an exquisite joy in reminiscence, and in putting down on paper, for the benefit of posterity, the picture of her own character and life.

She was thoroughly well pleased with herself. Never for one moment is her self-complacency disturbed by any touch of remorse, or by any doubts of her own goodness and greatness. But who shall begrudge her this consolation, the only one left her in life? It is easy to sneer at her excess of vanity, and at the way in which she posed before the mirror of her self-consciousness, but all this fades out of one's mind in the face of the superb courage and cheerfulness she showed in these last months, and before the vision of the sweetness and graciousness with which she endured her fate. An inspector of prisons, coming to Sainte-Pélagie, was shocked to find her so comfortably lodged, and ordered her back to her old cell, with a severe reprimand to her humane warders. But she did not complain. A certain saintliness of patience and a gentleness of spirit had, during this time of solitude and sorrow, replaced the rather vulgar boisterousness and energy of the woman who had been the hostess of the Girondins. To some of her fellow-prisoners she seemed indeed a saint, exhaling the fragrance of virtue and sweetness. 'From the time of her arrival,' wrote the Duchesse de Grammont, 'the apartment of Madame Roland became an asylum of peace in the bosom of this hell. If she descended into the court, her simple presence restored good order, and the abandoned women there, on whom no other power exerted an influence, were restrained by the fear of displeasing her. She gave alms to the most needy, and to all, counsel, consolation, and hope.' And Count Beugnot, who lodged in another part of the prison, has described her, at this time, with a still more tender enthusiasm.

'Something more than is generally found in the look of women beamed from her eyes, which were large, dark, and brilliant. She often spoke to me at the grating with the freedom and energy of a great man. . . . We used to gather round her to listen in a kind of admiring wonder. Her discourse was serious, without being cold, and she expressed herself with an elegance, a harmony and a moderation, that made of her language a kind of music of which the ear never wearied.'

Upon the day following the execution of the Girondins—that is, on November 1, 1793—Madame Roland was removed to the Conciergerie, from which her friends had gone out to die. It was an ominous change of lodgings, and she guessed its significance. During the next six days she was examined twice, and the witnesses against her were also questioned preparatory to the trial, which was put down for November 8. On the eve of that trial she was visited by Chauveau-Lagarde, the young advocate who had pluckily offered to defend her. As he took his leave, after a conversation in which he had endeavoured to console her by what he thought was the evidence of her innocence, she rose, and, slipping a ring from her finger, gave it to him without a word. The lawyer bent over her hand, deeply moved. 'Madame,' he said, in a broken voice, 'we shall meet to-morrow.' 'To-morrow,' said Madame Roland, 'I shall be no more.' She begged him not to come to court, for she would not endanger the life of a brave man. 'You would ruin yourself without saving me. . . . To-morrow I shall be in eternity.'

Early next morning she rose and dressed herself in a white gown, with a girdle of black velvet. Alas, that she should think of Marie Antoinette, who went also in white to a death which Madame Roland herself had urged. Perhaps at that moment some little pity for the woman she had hated

may have passed like a shadow across Madame Roland's soul, disturbing its tranquillity.

Yet it was with a calm and almost radiant face that she passed, like a white angel, with her long hair falling to her waist, to the bar of the Tribunal. Then, as in writing her 'Memoirs,' she had the courage that comes from a sublime self-consciousness. She moved with a sense of ecstasy as the saint who rejoices on reaching the crown of martyrdom. 'Her face,' says Count Beugnot, 'seemed to me more animated than usual. Its colour was exquisite, and there was a smile on her lips. With one hand she held up the train of her robe, the other she abandoned to the prisoners, who pressed forward to kiss it. Those who realised the fate that awaited her sobbed about her and commended her to God.'

She passed from among them with the words, 'Have courage,' and it seemed, when the white-clothed figure had gone, as if the prison had grown darker. Madame Roland's trial was a short matter. She was found guilty of aiding and abetting the Girondins, who were and had been in insurrection against the Convention, and she was sentenced to immediate death. The Terrorists were busy, and did their work with despatch. A cart was already in waiting for Madame Roland, and with a poor whining old fellow, whom she tried to comfort, they took her away to die. As she passed through the streets she held her head erect, and there was always a serene smile upon her face. With her hair down she looked so young, so girlish, that it may well have seemed incredible to the spectators that this was Roland's wife, who had led the Girondins. One cannot doubt that in those last moments of her life Madame Roland was exultantly happy, and one may perhaps say, though in all charity, that her sense of drama was satisfied. Better almost than the gift of life was it to stand before the people

as a martyr to liberty, to hear the sobs of those who gazed upon her, to see as it were the beautiful vision of herself walking with such exquisite grace and courage to a dreadful death. It is said on contemporary evidence that upon reaching the scaffold she asked that a pen and paper might be brought to her, so that she could set down the beautiful thoughts that had been vouchsafed to her. Even in the very grip of death she retained her love of self-expression. But the last act of her life is wholly gracious and unselfish. Being a woman, she was privileged to go first to death, but to save the poor terrified old man from the horrid sight of her blood, she gave place to him. Sanson, the executioner, would have refused, but she pleaded with a smile, 'Come, citizen, you cannot deny a lady her last request!' So the man went first, and she saw the beastly work without a tremor. Before lying down beneath the blade her eyes fell upon the great statue of Liberty commemorating August 10, and from her heart there came a pathetic cry, '*O liberté, comme on t'a jouée!*' They were her last words.

After all it was a glorious way of dying. Much more tragic was the fate of those who met death alone and secretly in the fields and ditches of provincial France, where only the grey sky and the little birds looked down on them, and where the wondering flowers were crimsoned with their blood. Poor Roland, old and broken-hearted, heard of his wife's fate when he was in hiding at Rouen. Leaving the city early one morning, he plodded feebly along the road to Paris. Then, outside the village of Baudoin, his strength and his spirit gave out, and he determined to end his miserable life. Under a stone he placed a piece of paper on which he had scribbled his *apologia*, and his last message to the world. Then, leaning against a tree, the poor old man opened his sword-cane and stabbed himself to the heart.

On the paper that fluttered by his corpse were the following words :

' Whoever thou mayest be who dost find me lying here, respect my remains. They are those of a man who consecrated his whole life to utility, and who has died as he lived, virtuous and honest.

' May my fellow-citizens be moved with more tender and humane sentiments. The blood which flows in torrents through my country dictates this advice. Not fear but indignation has made me leave my retreat at the moment when I have learnt that my wife has been assassinated. I have not wished to stay longer on an earth stained by so many crimes.'

It would be a dreary narrative to give the details of all the ways in which the hunted Girondins died. Condorcet, having wandered about half famished, aroused suspicion in a little *cabaret* by the voracity of his appetite, and by the air of gentility which his rough labourer's clothes could not conceal. They searched him and found a ' Horace ' in his pocket, a terrible proof of aristocracy ! So he was arrested, and taken to the local prison, where his identity was established. The next morning, when his gaolers took him bread, they found only a corpse in the cell. The last of the philosophers had obtained his liberty. He is accused of having poisoned himself, but perhaps despair and world-weariness had been as powerful as poison.

Pétion, and Buzot, the well-beloved of Madame Roland, were hunted like wild animals by the revolutionary committees at Bordeaux, where they had vainly attempted to stir up an insurrection against the Convention. They hid in the fields and ditches, and like wild animals they died. It is said that they also had taken poison, but it is probable they simply starved. Their bodies were found in an advanced

CONDORCET SE DONNANT LA MORT DANS SA PRISON

le 28 Mars 1794.

stage of decomposition, and they were hastily buried in the field of corn where they had lain down to die.

The handsome Barbaroux, hunted in the same way, was surprised in a meadow where he was sitting under the shadow of a tree, munching the last of his provisions. Seeing a stranger approaching, he snatched up a pistol and tried to blow out his own brains. But the wound was not fatal, and after a fortnight's imprisonment at the village of Castillon, where the inhabitants long remembered his beauty and great stature, he was taken on board a boat to Bordeaux, to die under the knife.

So, by the guillotine or by suicide and starvation, all the leaders of that party which had once ruled France, and done their best to steer a middle course between the forces of reaction and anarchy, were annihilated. The 'Mountain' triumphed, and under the Reign of Terror France was drowned in the blood of her children.

CHAPTER X

ROBESPIERRE AND THE TERROR

'It is a grave historical error to confuse Robespierre with the Terror; indeed it is an error no longer committed save by historians whose ignorance of the French language and of recent research preserves them in a traditional net.' So says Hilaire Belloc in his fascinating 'Study' of Robespierre. They are strong words, and it is a bold thing to contradict a brilliant writer who has honestly attempted to reveal something of the soul of that strange and wonderful man whose name was itself a terror and a symbolic watchword among his contemporaries. For, without contradicting the assertion, one should realise the exaggeration which serves to emphasise the truth in it. Robespierre was certainly not the dictator of the Terror, as commonly supposed by those who have but a superficial knowledge of the period, and he was just as certainly the victim of it, not of the reaction as formerly maintained. But, on the other hand, it was to the Terror that he owed his brief supremacy, reigning in France at least as the figure-head of the Revolutionary Government. And though he was afraid of the Terror with a more deadly fear, perhaps, than that of any man or woman who dreamed of the guillotine, he was, with some moments of insubordination, its faithful servant, its slave even, when he seemed most its master.

The soul of Robespierre is still a secret thing. Even Hilaire Belloc, fine student of psychology as he is, has been

able only to show certain moods and motives of it, to make shrewd guesses, to put forward tentative suggestions, that may or may not convince his audience, and to grope dimly in the dark recesses of his subject's brain. Robespierre is one of those men who may be denounced as a devil or defended as a hero, with strong arguments either way. It is as easy as ABC to entangle him with a chain of circumstantial evidence proving his complicity in horrid crimes. It is not much more difficult for the special pleader to show how he struggled valiantly against cruel circumstance and stood as a lofty character amidst a sea of corruption, swarming with obscene and devouring monsters. It is much the simplest way for any biographer to become counsel either for the prosecution or for the defence, and it must be confessed that most historians of the French Revolution have taken the easy road. But it is very difficult to strike the balance between the good and evil in Robespierre's heart, to reconcile his crass stupidity with his marvellous sagacity, his idealism with his baseness, his courage with his cowardice. Mr. Hilaire Belloc has so far been the only one to attempt this task, and on many pages of his book he confesses his impotence to read the riddle of the facts. Even he has not quite succeeded in impartiality, and overlooks far too much of the meanness and weakness and the coward cruelty which ran like a rotten thread through the warp and woof of Robespierre's life.

It seems to the present writer that cowardice was the greatest sin of Robespierre, and that this terrible defect, terrible at such a time and with such a man, was the chief cause of his dark faults and of his failure, sapping the foundations of his mental strength, poisoning his good blood, warping his noblest principles, and turning his humanity to cruelty. There are some who deny that Robespierre was

a coward, and they can make out a good case, because at moments of extreme peril Robespierre showed an unflinching front. But this is sometimes the quality of cowardice. The man who is terrorised by the mere thought of danger, whose imagination conjures up horrid visions, and who, knowing his own lack of courage, skulks behind men of action and shudderingly avoids the threatening powers of brute force, is not seldom more daring and more enduring when he is suddenly surprised into the midst of a dramatic scene of peril than men who have been constantly careless of their safety. He finds, with a sudden shock of relief, that his nerves are steady, and that the real and immediate danger is easier to face than his imaginary horrors. This discovery is a source of joy to him, and his self-respect is so suddenly restored that in a secret exultation of spirit he becomes audacious and adventurous. So it may have been with Robespierre. He was a coward, certainly. He must have been a coward, for it was noted even by his own friends how, whenever the Revolution passed from words to deeds, he went into hiding and insignificance. Not even as a spectator did he take part in any of those tumultuous scenes which were like the milestones along the road of the French Revolution. During the storming of the Bastille Robespierre sat alone in his rooms. When Paris marched to Versailles and brought back the King and Queen, Robespierre did not figure in the procession of triumph. When the mobs marched once and then again upon the Tuileries, Robespierre was not to be seen. When the Girondins made for war against Europe, Robespierre preached panic, and opposed them with his utmost power of argument. When Louis was driven to the scaffold Robespierre sat with closed windows and would not look out. When his own safety was menaced by his enemies in the Assembly he made elaborate

defences and appealed to the protection of the Jacobin Club. When his friends preached a reign of clemency to end the Terror, Robespierre first aided them, then abandoned them, and then accused them through sheer fright. Throughout his revolutionary career this strain of moral cowardice seems to explain his conduct; and even his success and his power, prodigious in appearance rather than in reality, were due not a little to this cause. His main source of power, or rather of eminence, for he was never more than a figure-head of power, was due undoubtedly to his almost constant devotion to the great ideal of universal liberty. Let us give him that credit. But as a secondary cause it was his amazing and continual caution, due in a great measure to timidity. He never, or very seldom, ventured in advance of the temper of the time. He steadily progressed in revolutionary destructiveness, but he moved step by step, feeling his way carefully, as he saw he could move with personal safety. Always he took advantage of popular passion to attain one more milestone along the road to democratic liberty, but he never led the people. By subtle suggestion, by hints and words with double meanings, by leaving things unsaid rather than by saying them, he sowed the seeds which would grow into the tree of the Republic. Cowardice taught him never to compromise himself, never, if possible, to make enemies of those who had power to do him harm. And yet his consistency to the idea of revolution covered his cowardice, so that he seemed to have been the leader when he had only followed, and seemed the one strong pillar of the people when he had only stood upon the foundations which they had laid in bloodshed.

When Robespierre was elected to the National Assembly as one of the deputies of the Third Estate of Artois, and walked in the black-garbed procession of his order through

the streets of Versailles, there was no cheer of recognition raised by the crowd of onlookers. He was one among a mob of unknown personalities. Yet when he had come to the States-General he had left behind him a local reputation, for he had been a man of note in the provincial town of Arras. There at least, as he had passed through the streets, he had the self-conscious pleasure of seeing the nudge and hearing the whisper of the citizen who pointed out *M. l'avocat* Robespierre to the stranger. Since his boyhood, at the Collège Louis-le-Grand at Paris, where he had studied theological philosophy and law with Camille Desmoulins and other men who would be heard of later, he had won the steadily increasing admiration and respect of his fellow-townsmen. He had all the qualities most pleasing in provincial society: an inviolable respectability, a puritanical simplicity of manners, speech and dress; a steady and plodding industry which achieved nothing but work, and was untainted by any dangerous touch of genius; a grave sincerity unspoilt by any sense of humour, and distinguishing him from other young men of his town who could not so easily curb the youthful wildness of their blood; above all, a gift for writing and speaking pure platitudes, so beloved of the middle-class minds who never tire of hearing the things they have heard a thousand times, and delight in the repetition of simple truths which need no effort of intellect to be understood. Maximilien Robespierre, with his slanting forehead, his thin pursed-up lips, his sharp up-turned nose, and his short-sighted blue eyes, always correctly dressed in *bourgeois* style, seemed to the good people of Arras quite a model young man. He had sown no wild oats, but had lived with virtue. As an advocate he had argued the petty cases of quarrelsome citizens with a lengthy eloquence which at least made them feel they had got their money's worth of law. The

Bishop of Arras, impressed by such seriousness, had made him a judge of his ecclesiastical court, which, before the Revolution, had the power of life and death over those who came within its jurisdiction. This was the cause of Robespierre's first failure. He resigned his position to avoid passing sentence of death. Strange sensibility, it seems to us now, who remember how many men's heads rolled off when Robespierre held the symbols of power! Yet even to the last he was not so inconsistent in his dislike to capital punishment as his actions seem to show when Terror ruled in France. In the National Assembly he once plucked up courage to denounce the injustice of judicial executions, in a memorable phrase that contains more than a platitude. 'Every time you kill a man by law,' he said, 'you destroy something of the sacredness of man.' It is difficult to reconcile such words with his later speeches, yet to himself no doubt he justified himself by casuistry, believing, or blinding himself to believe, that by destroying the enemies of the Revolution the reign of universal liberty would come when no man need be killed by law, because liberty would abolish the necessity of law.

This was according to the gospel of Rousseau, and if we would know the 'first principles' and the philosophy of Robespierre we must study the written word of Rousseau. For Robespierre was Rousseau re-incarnate with his poetic fire gone out. It is possible to believe that if Jean-Jacques Rousseau had lived through the Revolution he would have done very much as Robespierre did. The natural timidity, the isolation and self-consciousness, the incessant suspiciousness and the intellectual idealism of the one man were reflected in the other. Robespierre was a respectable and uninspired Rousseau, but being respectable he had not the sincere humanity and the natural philosophy of the man whose

frailties, contemptible as they were, taught him the inner mysteries of the heart and the need of charity, which Robespierre never knew. Yet, with these differences, the likeness between the two men is remarkable, and Robespierre became the idol of the Revolution because he faithfully and unceasingly proclaimed the gospel of Rousseauism which contained the new testament of democracy and the prophecies of the future state. While the Assembly men were fighting each other in factions, quarrelling over points of order and trivial amendments; while some were intriguing with royalty, and others pandering to the passions of the mob; while reaction was opposing revolution, and opportunism was the order of the day, Robespierre stood alone, without friends, and really without, or above, party, boring his audience to exasperation with continual harangues on the first principles of liberty, preaching abstract truths when Paris and France were seething in the caldron of popular action, reiterating the platitudes, as they had now become, of Rousseau's ideal socialism when violence was raging in the streets. The boredom of his speeches, and his aloofness from the intrigues of persons or parties, his *bourgeois* respectability and his pedantic manners, enabled him to encourage and defend the advancement of the revolutionary ideal for a long time without arousing the antagonism of his fellow-deputies who were at each other's throats. It was only when the Jacobin element in the Assembly was in open conflict with the Girondins or so-called Moderates that Robespierre became openly allied to the former and threw off his mask of intellectual restraint, thereby drawing upon himself the bitterest hostility of the Constitutional party. At that time, however, the power of the people supported the extremists, and Robespierre felt that he was fairly safe.

It is curious how little Robespierre counts in the early

days of the National Assembly. It was not that he did not often speak. On the contrary, his speeches were frequent and lengthy, but they attracted little attention, dealing only with general principles which for a generation had been the stock in trade of liberal writers and speakers. The neat little man with the high forehead and the dim blue eyes, peering through his spectacles at his closely written notes, seemed a harmless but ineffective person to men of impatient eloquence and heated thought. Only Mirabeau, fiery also, but with astute observing eyes, watched Robespierre with admiring interest. 'That young man believes what he says,' he remarked; 'he will go far.' Robespierre was equally interested in Mirabeau, which was natural, of course, as the Count was the most perplexing and impressive character of the day; but the model citizen of Arras could see nothing save evil in the loose-living orator and Royalist. 'Mirabeau's position,' he said, 'will be destroyed by the evil effect of his reputed morals.'

Only on rare occasions did Robespierre's continual flow of words contain any of that electric force or natural and moving eloquence by which Mirabeau, though he was distrusted, dominated the imagination of the Assembly. Yet now and again he did rise above the dreariness of first principles, as in his famous answer to the Archbishop of Aix, who came, holding a piece of black bread, to ask a grant for the poor.

'Go!' he cried, with something of Mirabeau himself in his fierce scorn. 'You are the minister of a sublime religion which has poverty at its foundations. Go and tell your colleagues that they need deceive the Commons no longer with the affectation of urgency, for your canons permit you to sell the very vessels of the altar in the cause of the poor. You have but to dismiss your liveries, and to sell your

coaches, and to empty your palaces somewhat ; you will find plenty of means for charity.' Yet, while attacking the luxury and wealth of the higher clergy, Robespierre, with his usual caution, and also, we may admit, with real humanity, defended the poorer priests of France who were in danger of losing their livelihood. He demanded pensions for those who were turned out of their parishes, claiming that they deserved the indulgence of the Assembly by reason of their long service, and still more by their necessity. This appeal for generosity to the priesthood won many friends for Robespierre. Although the Revolution had caused the downfall of the Church in France, the traditions of Catholicism and the influence of the humbler clergy, in the provinces at least, were not entirely annihilated. It is, indeed, more than likely that the counter-revolution or reaction was due, in a large measure, to the dismay that crept into the hearts of many liberal men and women by the overthrow of the old religion. Robespierre, therefore, was playing for safety and popularity when he attacked the luxury of the Church, but defended its poverty.

Robespierre's popularity, though it was rather a reverence for the incorruptible and consistent man than an enthusiasm of hero-worship, was firmly secured by his strenuous endeavour to obtain universal suffrage for the people, his opposition to the veto of the King, and his denunciation of martial law against the peasant incendiarists, whom, with his usual pedantry, he called 'those accused but not yet proved guilty of arson.' Yet it is not quite fair to say that Robespierre was 'playing for popularity.' He had none of the vanity of a Lafayette, who desired nothing else but popularity. Rather Robespierre desired to have the people behind him, in order that their power might enable him to give them liberty. In his poor little apartment in the rue Saintonge he sat alone

with this idea. With indefatigable industry he wrote and wrote and wrote, preparing his long speeches for the Assembly or the Jacobin Club, or his long letters to constituents, covering reams of paper in his neat, lawyer's hand, scratching out and revising his phrases with a painstaking that almost amounted to genius. His life was simple and austere, and he shunned society. Now and again he would spend the evening with Camille and Lucile Desmoulins ; occasionally, when the Girondins were in power, he would visit the salon of Madame Roland, listening rather than speaking, a somewhat disconcerting death's-head at these feasts of reason, and ill at ease with himself. But his real life was in the solitude of his own room, where he could be alone with his dream. It was a dream of Rousseau's ideal State, where liberty should reign without government, where there should be no kings, and no constitution save the sovereign will of the people. What sublime and heroic folly! Outside his windows the people of Paris were striving for sovereignty. When Foulon and Berthier had dangled from the lantern they were but the first-fruits of the people's ' sovereign will,' and anarchy ravened in the streets. Robespierre himself, though he hugged his idea, never doubting that the era of peace and perfect liberty was close at hand, shuddered at the powers he was determined to unleash. The sovereign will of the people was already revealing itself, and its revelation was one of terror. But Robespierre, coward though he was naturally, nerved himself to ride the storm of popular insurrection, and to risk shipwreck, so that he might lead the people to the promised land. He had much of the fanaticism of the prophet. Though in the modern garb of thought, he believed himself to be God-inspired, to be the apostle of universal liberty, and in this belief he was ready to endure his terrors, to brave his enemies, even—hardest

of all—to violate his principles of justice and liberty by allowing or committing the injustice and tyranny of temporary anarchy, so that the future of justice and liberty might be assured. It was the philosopher turned casuist, and the prophet changed into a tyrant. This change was gradual, so gradual that Robespierre slipped into sin imperceptibly, and only realised it, with a sense of haunting horror that he tried to stifle down, when he suddenly found that he had allowed circumstance to strangle his ideals, and fear to turn his cowardice into cruelty.

His scope of oratory was almost unlimited, for he had the Jacobin Club as well as the Assembly for his audience. It was at the club more than at the Assembly that his influence gradually became potent over the minds of his auditors, and among the Jacobins he could speak with greater freedom. But even here he was always cautious, and it was noticeable that his attacks upon Lafayette, who was now falling back upon a reactionary policy, were always of an impersonal character. 'There is a general,' he said, not boldly challenging the man by name, as Marat, Danton, and Desmoulins did not hesitate to do. It was noticeable, also, that upon the evening when the King fled to Varennes, and when even moderate men, excited by the ominous episode, not knowing yet that Louis would be brought back a prisoner, talked openly of a Republic, Robespierre kept his mouth sealed on that subject, waiting until the end of the adventure was known. He was alarmed, as he was always alarmed when any swift and sudden event disturbed and hastened the progress of the revolutionary tide. Madame Roland relates in her memoirs how she met him, in the afternoon of that day, at the house of Pétion, the future mayor of Paris. She noticed his evident terror, and listened to the gloomy words with which he maintained that the royal family would

not have adopted this plan without having left behind in Paris a counter-revolutionary party who would order a *St. Bartholomew of the patriots*. 'I do not expect to live twenty-four hours,' he said. Pétion and Brissot ignored his fears. In their opinion the King's flight would be his ruin, and they must profit by it. It was evident to everyone, they said, that Louis did not wish to maintain the constitution he had sworn to, that this was the time to be assured of one more homogeneous, and that the minds of people must be prepared for a Republic. Robespierre smiled nervously throughout this conversation, and, biting his nails, asked with a sneer, 'What is a Republic?' At the Jacobin Club his influence prevented any discussion that night of a republican constitution; but, nervous of losing his hold upon the extremists by playing too cautiously, he stood up and maintained that the King should be impeached for treason, and, to make the most of his heroic pose, admitted that he spoke these words 'at the peril of his life.' A dramatic scene took place. He was cheered to the echo, and the Jacobins swore to defend his life with theirs. Bailly, the mayor of Paris, and Lafayette were present at this ovation of their enemy, and as it ended Danton, who had none of Robespierre's caution, flashed out a direct accusation of treason against these two men and their colleagues. There was a tumultuous scene, and the ill-lighted chapel, where the Jacobins met, resounded with fierce shouts and threats. Robespierre, in spite of himself, had been dragged over to the side of the extremists by Danton's attack upon his enemies, and Lafayette, who was still a power in Paris, having the command of the National Guards and of the secret police, marked him down as a man to be removed. For the ignominious return of the royal family upon the following day readjusted the position of affairs. The moderate

men who had allowed themselves to think for a moment of a Republic now returned to their allegiance to the monarchy and the constitution. The forces of reaction gathered themselves to strike a heavy and decisive blow against the extreme revolutionists, and the Jacobins came first on the list of those to be destroyed. Robespierre was in danger. In spite of all his care, he now stood identified with a party. He trembled, and risked all his reputation for the sake of safety. During the weeks that followed the return from Varennes the bolder spirits of the Cordeliers and Jacobins prepared a petition demanding the abdication of the King. Robespierre exerted all his influence, and succeeded in his endeavour to prevent his club from accepting the responsibility of this petition. But he could not stave off the conflict between the defenders of the monarchy and the red republicans. Three days after the Feast of the Federation, when the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille had been celebrated with but a feeble appearance of unanimity before the altar of the Champ de Mars, a great crowd of angry people surged into the broad open space, determined to present the republican petition in spite of its having been condemned by the Assembly and abandoned by the Jacobins. The events of that day have already been narrated, and when Bailly, with his red flag, ordered Lafayette's guards to fire upon the people, and was obeyed, the strewn corpses and the streams of blood were signs of a reactionary victory over the Revolution. Lafayette showed more energy as a policeman than he had ever done as a champion of popular liberty, and his agents and National Guards went a-hunting for the leaders of revolt. Newspaper presses were destroyed and journalists arrested. Panic reigned in Paris, and men like Danton, Desmoulins, and Marat went into hiding or fled the country. At the Jacobin Club on the evening of

that bloody Sunday Robespierre had ascended the tribune as usual, and uttered a long-winded speech to which nobody listened. The ears of his audience were not attentive to him, but were strained to catch the echoes of the tumult in the streets outside and the tramp of Lafayette's guards. The Jacobins were pale and gloomy. Death seemed very close to them that night, and some doubted whether they would live to see another dawn. One by one they stole away to hide in secret haunts of the city. Robespierre stayed on, still talking to the half-emptied benches. Then at last he, too, left the chapel, standing in the doorway, looking out into the dark street where, perhaps, his enemies were lurking, ready to pounce upon him. All the coward in him was alert and suspicious, but his nerves were deadened by the chill terror of the night. A man plucked him by the sleeve, and Robespierre started at the touch. But it was a friend, honest Duplay, the master carpenter, whose grave eyes had often watched him with devotion and expressive reverence when he had spoken from the tribune. The man had urged him to accept a shelter under his roof, hinting at the danger threatening Robespierre's own domicile in the rue Saintonge. Robespierre hesitated. Was this man to be trusted? Could a man trust his own brother in these days? But there was a dog's fidelity in the carpenter's eyes, and Robespierre took his arm and went with him. Duplay lived in the rue St. Honoré, over his carpenter's shop, and here Robespierre found shelter until the day of his death. He found more than a shelter, he found a home, where love resided. Duplay had four daughters, simple and honest as himself, and with the same reverence for the man, their superior in birth and education, whose gravity and respectability and middle-class philosophy clothed him, in their eyes, with sanctity. They were proud to have him

in their house, and he held the place of an honoured guest. When he sat in his small room above the carpenter's shed, writing with ceaseless industry, the women went about their household duties with something of the same devotion that had moved the hearts of Martha and Mary. As later on Robespierre's name became the symbol of the revolutionary ideal, and afterwards the watchword of Terror, those women's hearts became still more firmly devoted to his service. There were thousands of men and women who shuddered at his name, hating him as a man of fiendish cruelty. But the household of Duplay had no fear for the guest in their upper room, and no horror of him. With them he was always amiable and mild, eager to explain his motives and to justify his actions. Whatever he did seemed to them right, for did they not know the essential goodness of his heart, his noble ideals, his disinterested patriotism? Doubtless to the Duplays, and especially to Éléonore, that eldest sister whose eyes stirred in him a sentiment of tenderness, that in a man of stronger passions would have been a burning flame of love, Robespierre showed the best that was in him. Their devotion and hero-worship soothed him like sweet music. It was the proof of his own virtue which he worshipped as the holy spirit in the tabernacle of his own heart. The love of these people, so respectable and virtuous themselves, assured him of his own moral eminence, and even when he knew at last that the sacred image in his sanctuary had toppled down, when he became an accomplice of murderers and terrorists, he still came back from his public duties to the household of the Duplays, bathing his spirit in their domesticity and devotion, and reassuring himself, at least while he was with them, that virtue had not gone out of him.

The reign of reaction did not last long. Lafayette

Duplessis Bertaux

MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE.

slackened his repressive measures when the Constituent Assembly presented their famous 'Constitution' to the King, and then dissolved, having, in spite of all their weakness and discordance, established the liberties of France, and swept away much that was rotten, corrupt, and tyrannical in the old *régime*. One by one the leaders of the extreme revolutionists came back to their old haunts, watching and waiting for the opportunity to make further advances along the road of anarchy to what they believed to be the ultimate goal of democracy. Robespierre retired to his own native town of Arras for a few weeks' holiday and to receive the homage of his former fellow-citizens, who fêted and harangued him, with all the enthusiasm of provincials for one of their own townsmen who has attained to notoriety. Then, after five weeks of this local celebration, very pleasing to his vanity and cementing his self-conceit, he, too, returned to Paris to resume his quiet domestic life in the household of the Duplays, and to rise to a power in France which ultimately was too heavy for him to support.

It was Robespierre who was chiefly responsible for the self-denying ordinance by which the Constituent Assembly resolved that none of their members should be elected to the Legislative Assembly which was to succeed them. It is difficult still to understand how such a measure was passed by a majority. But Robespierre's motive is clear enough. He, like Marat and other extremists, believed that when the new deputies were elected the wave of revolutionary ardour surging over France would carry into the next Assembly a bolder and more advanced set of representatives.

In this both Robespierre and Marat were disappointed, for in the Legislative Assembly the moderate men, or Girondins, as they came to be called from the leaders of the party, who belonged to the Department of the Gironde, were in a

great majority over the extremists. It is true that many of the Girondins were more advanced than the majority of their predecessors, and came to work with a spirit and energy which promised great things; but other leaders desired to support the constitutional monarchy and soon came into violent collision with the men of the 'Mountain,' who accused them of royalism and reaction.

Lafayette had been defeated in his desire to be elected as the new mayor of Paris, falling between two stools, owing to the distrust of the Court party and the enmity of the populace, who never forgave the massacre of the Champ de Mars. Pétion, the demagogue, had obtained the post, and Lafayette was sent in command of a frontier force, so that in this respect the revolutionary leaders were not displeased. But Robespierre, like Marat and the 'Mountain' generally, fell foul of the Girondins because of their warlike policy, and their submission to the King's right of veto. Robespierre, no longer a deputy, had still the Jacobin Club, and its four thousand affiliated societies in the provinces, as the audience of his interminable voice, and the public for his industrious pen. This lifted him into a power greater than if he had sat in the new Assembly, for the Jacobin Club was the lecture-hall of the people and the real Parliament of the Revolution. Its decrees were a terrorising influence over the Assembly, and its orators were the leaders of revolt. Night after night Robespierre attacked the Girondins upon their war policy, and especially Brissot, the leader of the Girondins, who was chiefly responsible for the war. He believed, sincerely and not without some justice, that this war would only play into the hands of the reactionaries; that armies led by men like Lafayette and by Royalist soldiers would, if victorious, become a danger to the Revolution by establishing a military dictatorship, and, if defeated, a more

terrible danger still by allowing the armies of Austria and the French *émigrés* to march into the heart of France and set despotism once more upon the throne.

If war they must have, he said, let Frenchmen be their own leaders. 'But shall we await the orders of the War Office to overturn thrones? Shall we await the signal of the Court? Shall we be commanded by these same patricians, these eternal favourites of despotism, in a war against aristocrats and kings? No; let us march forward alone. Let us be our own leaders. But see, the orators of war stop me! Here is Monsieur Brissot, who tells me that *Monsieur le Comte de Narbonne* must conduct the whole of this affair; that we must march under the orders of *Monsieur le Marquis de Lafayette*, and to the executive power alone belongs the right of leading the nation to victory and liberty. Ah, citizens, this word has broken the spell! Adieu victory and independence of the people! If the sceptres of Europe ever be broken it must be by other hands. . . . I declare frankly that war, as I understand the term, that war, such as I have proposed, is impracticable. And if we are to accept the war of the Court, of the ministers, of the patricians who affect patriotism, oh, then, far from believing in the enfranchisement of the world, I no longer believe in your liberty. The wisest course left us is to defend it against the perfidy of those internal enemies who lull you with those heroic illusions.'

Night after night Robespierre repeated these denunciations of the war of Lafayette and of the Royalist officers who commanded the ragged and ill-equipped armies on the frontier. These were the days when one may doubt his cowardice, for he ran some danger. The Girondins did not suffer his hostility in silence. Brissot accused him of being paid to oppose the war. Guadet demanded the punish-

ment of 'a man who has become the idol of the people,' and who had perpetually in his mouth the words 'liberty,' 'tyranny,' and 'conspiracy,' mingled with flatteries to the mob. But Robespierre knew that the Jacobins were behind him, the Jacobins of Paris and of the four thousand provincial clubs. At this time he may have well believed that if he were impeached before the Assembly France itself would rise to defend him, and therefore he would hide his cowardice in his heart and dare to be bold. He knew that the Court party at least was powerless to hurt him, and that the monarchy itself was doomed, for he had inklings of the great conspiracy organised by the hot-heads of the Girondins themselves to bring the men of Marseilles to Paris to make the backbone of a new revolution against the party of reaction. The conspirators, Danton and Desmoulins, Fabre d'Églantine, Barbaroux and others, took Robespierre into their counsels, but he shrank back from them, afraid. Violence terrified him always—the violence of mobs. It was against his principles. It spoilt his ideal of the sovereign will. If violence was on foot Robespierre preferred to be in his room at the Duplays. Afterwards, when the deeds were done, he would come forth again and take advantage of the new situation without injury to his self-respect.

So June 25 came, when the mob invaded the Tuileries, insulting, but not harming, the royal family, and then August 9, when the tocsin clashed upon the evening wind, when the tramp of thousands of armed men shook the very ground of Paris, and when the dawn broke over the Tuileries to shed its pale glamour upon the strewn corpses of the Swiss Guards and the débris of a night of orgy and red revenge. Robespierre had sat at home, biting his nails, we may imagine, and growing more livid than usual when the echoes of the insurrection came through the windows of the carpenter's

house. He had played the cautious part as usual. He had had no hand in the plotting or the making of that frightful chapter in the Revolution. But when all was over he came forward again, accepting the new facts and ready to make use of them. His soul had shuddered at the thought of massacre, but when the corpses were removed he spoke a eulogy of the people who had steeped their hands in blood, in his usual style of inflated sentiments and philosophical platitudes.

'The whole people of France,' he said, 'so long degraded and oppressed, felt that the moment had arrived to fulfil that sacred duty, imposed by nature upon all living, and more especially upon all nations—that, namely, of providing for their own safety by a generous resistance to oppression. Thus,' he continues, 'has commenced the most glorious revolution which has honoured humanity. Let us go further and say the only one which has had an object worthy of man—that of founding political societies on the immortal principles of equality, of justice, and of reason. What other object could have united, in one moment, this immense people, these innumerable multitudes of citizens of all conditions, making them act in concert without chiefs, without watchwords? What other cause could have inspired that sublime and patient courage and have given birth to miracles of heroism superior to all which history has related of Greece and Rome?'

So he did homage to the insurrection of the 10th, in which he had had no share. Once more he took advantage of other men's violence to mount upon their shoulders and proclaim fine phrases which were never wholly insincere. The men of action were glad to have him up there, mouthing first principles. This little man, with the gospel of Rousseau on his lips, this neat little *bourgeois*, in his nice clean ruffles

and spotless nankeen breeches, made crime itself respectable, and covered the foul and bloody stains of murder with the whitewash of virtuous sentiment. Pétion, Danton, Desmoulins, and the faction of the Hôtel de Ville, who had engineered the attack upon the Tuileries, were willing to overlook the cowardice of the man for the sake of his cloak of 'incorruptibility.' They would exalt him as their figure-head, as a symbol of the revolutionary ideal, and to the people—who knew nothing of motive or policy, but who saw and heard Robespierre as the spokesman of the Hôtel de Ville before the bar of the Assembly, demanding a National Convention and a Revolutionary Tribunal of Justice—it seemed as clear as day that Maximilien Robespierre, with his inexhaustible eloquence and his unshaken ideals of justice, was the heaven-sent leader of the Revolution.

So August passed into September, when great fear took possession of the heart of Paris; when the distant sounds of foreign armies, marching over the frontiers of the nation and driving back the ragged regiments of the people, brought fearful omens of disaster with every passing breeze; when Lafayette's stern message to the Assembly, demanding the downfall of the Jacobins and the restoration of 'order,' came as a warning of great treachery; when Danton's appeal for volunteers roused a patriotic frenzy throughout the nation, but when the rumours of Royalist plots made cowardice the excuse for cruelty. September had come, and the days of horror which have made that month a memory of shame and barbarism. The new Revolutionary Tribunal had filled the prisons with 'suspects,' with all the aristocrats who had stayed to brave out the dangers of the time rather than swell the armies of *émigrés* across the frontiers who found it easy to be heroic at a distance. The prisons were

full, but Marat and the leaders of the mob were calling for volunteers to empty them without waiting for the slow and less relentless process of the law. The murderous work in the prisons of Paris was not commenced without warning. There had been a writing on the wall which all men not blind could read plainly enough. Robespierre himself, though never asked for help when brute force was stirring, knew murder was stalking through the streets. That night, when the work of blood was done in dark places by candle-light, he could not rest or sleep. In the memoirs of the time we catch glimpses of him, wandering to the lodgings of his friends like some uneasy and conscience-stricken ghost. He came to Saint-Just, that young and fiery man, that handsome, impetuous boy, for he was hardly more, who by some strange freak of psychology had bound himself to the little coward philosopher of revolution with a worshipping devotion that was faithful to the death, when but few men were faithful to Robespierre. Saint-Just knew also what was on foot, but he shrugged his shoulders with a boy's callousness of blood-shed when enthusiasm for a cause makes him careless of death for himself and others.

'What are you doing?' asked Robespierre, seeing the young man take off his coat.

'Going to bed and to sleep,' said Saint-Just.

'Sleep? On a night like this? Do you not hear the tocsin? Know you not that to-night will perhaps be the last of thousands, who, living men at the moment you fall asleep, will be lifeless corpses ere you awake?'

'I know it,' said the young man calmly, preparing his pillow. 'I deplore it. Would that I were strong enough to check these convulsions of society struggling between life and death! But what am I? After all, those who perish to-night are not the friends of our ideas. Good-

night.' He lay down and slept. But Robespierre did not sleep. All through the night he paced up and down with quick and nervous tread, and what thoughts came to him in those long, cold hours must have made his brain a hell. For he was not like Saint-Just, a hot-blooded young fanatic. His blood was cold, and in his heart there were graven principles of justice and humanity which burned as though branded with irons, because the acid of remorse ate into them.

'What has brought you back so early?' asked Saint-Just, when the daylight woke him.

'Do you think I have returned?' said Robespierre.

'What! Have you been to sleep here, then?'

'Sleep!' said Robespierre smiling, with a gaunt and haggard look. 'Sleep! No, I have not gone to bed. I have been watching, like a spirit of remorse or crime. I have had the weakness not to sleep.'

It was the remorse of a man who, having been stained and splashed with the dirt of life's rough road, sees the sudden vision of his early youth when he was clean. It was the remorse of the soldier who, having led men through the battle, looks round upon the field of horrors and shudders at the work done at his direction. Robespierre's hands were clean of those massacres, but not his soul. Less guilty than Marat in a direct way, he was more responsible because more respected. The fears he had conjured up of secret plots and a reactionary revolution were more the cause of the great terror, which had led to the murders in the prisons, than the violent denunciations by the People's Friend. Yet his remorse was like that of the drunkard who, seeing into the pit of hell during a night's debauch, goes again to the bottle to steady his nerves. For Robespierre, that day of September was the boundary-line of his life between self-

conscious rectitude and secret shame. Up to then he had acted always with sincerity in the righteousness of his way, but afterwards he wilfully gambled with his conscience for the sake of a great *coup*. His purpose was not ignoble. He may be acquitted of the mere vanity of ambition. He had that vanity, the weak desire of eminence for its own sake, but that was not his leading motive nor his mastering passion. What he desired was the ideal State, and for that, after September, he was willing to make a temporary bargain with the devil, willing to commit what he knew to be crime, so that in the end virtue might come of it. He believed himself to be the only man in France who still preserved the philosophy of Rousseau pure and undefiled. He believed that he was the only one who would be able to save the nation from the two evils of monarchical despotism and irremediable anarchy. Therefore, in his cold argumentative way, he worked out the logic of the case. To shape the new State he must preserve his power, and to preserve his power he must lead the people. To lead them he must go with them when they leapt into violence, placing himself in the vanguard of violence itself. His enemies must be destroyed, not because he hated them, but because he loved France. His friends even must be destroyed if they were heretical, for he alone held the true gospel. He would fulfil his bargain with the devil up to the date of release. There should be a clean sweep of every foe to his ideals of liberty. Then he would close the contract with the evil one, and mercy, peace, justice, and benignant law should rule for ever after the brief and bloody reign of the guillotine. These were not the arguments he admitted to himself, but in some such way in his subconsciousness they formed his system of logic. Before the looking-glass of his soul he posed still with his principles and his platitudes, but there must have been times

when between his phrases there came grinning to his face the ugly truth. Now and again, too, he faltered and sickened at his work. 'Revolutions have no pity,' he said, when the Queen was condemned. 'They spare neither age nor sex. If I might save one of those accused, I would give my own head to save her.' Occasionally he strove desperately to disentangle himself from the snakes into whose coils he had stepped. Towards the end, indeed, those snakes whose envenomed stings he had pointed at the breasts of his enemies closed round him, because he would feed them no more. Though he still stood to all appearance as the snake-charmer, holding them at his command, a terrifying figure to his spectators, he was numbed and powerless in their embrace, until at last they turned and destroyed the man who had seemed their master.

After September he was, then, an opportunist and a casuist, doing evil that good might follow. Having recovered from his night of horror, he took advantage of the murders and spoke a panegyric of the murderers. He deplores that 'one innocent man' had perished. 'Citizens, weep over that mistake! I have long wept over it.' But for the rest, their deaths were justified. 'Let us keep our tears for calamities more touching.'

He was now the declared and the most formidable enemy of the Girondins. They were his enemies and the enemies of France because they had plunged into war, which he had opposed, and the war was disastrous, as he had prophesied. He demanded the impeachment of Brissot, and at the Jacobin Club he called for a new insurrection against the power of reaction. 'We must raise a revolutionary army; we must enlist every patriot, every *sans-culotte*; the inhabitants of the Faubourgs must form the strength and backbone of our troops. I do not say that we should sharpen our swords

to kill the priests. We can afford to despise them, and we should only be giving the fanatics another pretext for crying out against us. We must have no compunction in driving from our sections all who have shown themselves to be imbued with a spirit of moderation ; we must disarm not only the nobles and the priests, but every plotter, every suspected citizen, everyone who has given proofs of disloyalty. Let the whole of Paris take up arms, let the sections and the people be vigilant, and let the Convention declare itself the voice of the nation.'

A few days after this speech Robespierre ascended the tribune of the Jacobin Club and exhausted himself in accusations of reactionary plots. He uttered no names, but with an air of terrible mystery, which sent cold shudders through his audience and spread panic and fear through Paris, he raised the spectres of treason.

' Peculiar circumstances have brought to my knowledge some terrible truths,' he said. ' The reverses of our armies are due to one cause—villainous treason. . . . The success of our foes is due neither to their courage nor to their talents. It has always been treason which has gained it for them. . . . Treason is everywhere, in the mess-room and in the editorial office.' He accused journalists of plotting to overthrow the Republic, he smelt treason even among the beggars of Paris, he discovered it in the very heart of the Convention, and in the Committee of Public Safety. ' Elected against my will a member of the Committee, I have seen many things which I should never have dared to suspect. I have seen on the one hand patriotic members straining every nerve to save their country, and on the other traitors weaving their plots in the heart of the Committee and doing so the more boldly since they were certain of going unpunished. Since examining the Government more closely I have been

able to see all the crimes which are daily permitted in its name. The people will save itself. We must keep up a continual fire upon our foes without, but we must crush all those within.'

The Girondins trembled at Robespierre's words. They knew that when he looked at them he had death in his eyes. They feared that Gorgon look of his, and they knew that unless they were stronger than he they must fall before him. Therefore they grappled with him, not without courage, for he was more than a man—a personification. Louvet, one of their number, accused him in the National Convention.

' Robespierre,' he said, stretching out his arm in a pale passion, ' I accuse you of having ceaselessly calumniated the purest patriots ! I accuse you of having circulated calumny during the first week of September ; that is to say, at a time when calumny was death. I accuse you of having, to the best of your power, debased the character and the authority of the representatives. I accuse you of having constantly put yourself forward as an object of idolatry ; of having suffered yourself to be designated, in your own presence, as the only virtuous man in France who could save the people, and of having said so yourself ! I accuse you of having aspired to supreme power, as is demonstrated by the facts which I have indicated, and by your whole conduct, which will accuse you louder than I can.'

Robespierre reserved his defence for a week. He was nervous, scared more than he had ever been. Perhaps, after all, he had been too bold. But when a week later he ascended to the tribune, pale and highly strung, his cold, dispassionate, but subtle eloquence, the reputation for integrity with which he was still clothed, the high-flown philosophy which even in that grave peril yet flowed from his lips, the cautiousness with which he had kept away from

all definite action until it was accomplished, his poverty, his industry, and his consistency to the principles of revolution all gave the lie to his accusers, and turned their accusations upon themselves. He was acquitted, and the immense enthusiasm of the crowds outside, the idolatry of the Jacobins at their club that evening, were the proofs of his high position.

Robespierre followed up his victory with quiet but relentless energy. He accused the King of treason to the nation, and demanded that he should be brought to trial. 'For myself I abhor the penalty of death,' he said. 'Yet, a dethroned king in the heart of a republic not yet established! A king whose very name draws foreign wars on the nation! Neither prison nor exile can make his an innocent existence. It is with regret I pronounce the fatal truth! Louis must perish rather than a hundred thousand virtuous citizens! Louis must perish because our country must live!' Some of the Girondins at least, though not all by any means, would have saved the King. But the party of the 'Mountain,' with Robespierre as their leader, had the power of the people behind them, and with the hall surrounded by cannon and an excited mob, many death votes were given because fear guided the hands that wrote them down. So Louis died, and his death was the downfall of the Girondins themselves.

Lafayette and Dumouriez were now acknowledged traitors to the Revolution. They had denounced the Jacobins and threatened the National Convention with the armies under their command. But it was the Girondins who had appointed them to those commands. Surely, then, the Girondins were in league with traitors. They, too, must be destroyed as enemies of the Republic. Such was the text of Robespierre's accusation, and they were doomed. Many fled, to be killed or to kill themselves in the provinces. Those who stayed

were tried with a mockery of justice and died with the song of liberty on their lips.

Robespierre was now triumphant—and defeated. The Commune of Paris dominated the Convention, and the Committee of Public Safety, of which he was a member, dominated the Commune. In this he was triumphant, for inexorably he had crushed his enemies. But he suffered also a bitter defeat, for the power that he created became too strong for its creator. It forced him onwards along the way of violence, when he would have begun his *régime* of idealism in which bloodshed should cease. It clamoured for victims, and chose the men whom, of all others, he would have saved. Danton and Desmoulins had been patriots whose zeal and energy in the cause of revolution even he had never doubted. Yet the heads of these two men, his friends and his admirers, were demanded by Billaud-Varennes and Collot d'Herbois, even by Saint-Just and Couthon, his closest colleagues, and, as he soon found, his masters. He shared the desire of Danton and Desmoulins for an end to all the bloodshed. He read and approved the first papers of the 'Vieux Cordelier,' in which Desmoulins preached the new gospel of clemency. When Danton was accused by the men with whom he worked, his anger was stronger than his cowardice, and, springing to his feet, he cried out that they would sacrifice 'the best of patriots.' Yet after that outburst, his cowardice, his ambition, his vision of the great ideal got the better of his generous rage. Not yet was it safe to allow of clemency. His colleagues showed their suspicion of him: told him plainly, indeed, that if he sided with Danton and Desmoulins they would demand his blood as well as theirs. It was too soon for him to die. He must still rule with violence, so that later he might rule with love. The two patriots must be sacrificed so that other men might

live, so that he himself might live to shape out the glorious destinies of a new nation. The devil's bargain was not yet concluded, and with his own hand he wrote Danton's impeachment, and with his own voice, after vain efforts to give Desmoulins a loophole of escape, that was arrogantly ignored, he delivered up the young man who, at the beginning of the Revolution, had first called the people to arms. So Danton and Desmoulins rode on their way to death, while Robespierre sat with his head in his hands asking questions of his soul in the little room above the carpenter's shop.

Wedged in between these feasts of blood there came a Feast of Reason. Ladies of less than doubtful virtue, attired as goddesses, were led into the Convention, where they sang songs of liberty. Chaumette, one of the members of the Convention, led forward the most beautiful of these courtesans, and presenting her to the President struck a theatrical attitude and made an oration. 'Mortals,' he cried, 'recognise no other divinity than reason, of which I present to you the loveliest and purest image!' It was a scene for the gods and men to laugh at. But Robespierre sat frowning at the farce, and then retired with Saint-Just, without disguising his intense disgust. That day the Feast of Reason was celebrated also at the high altar of Notre Dame, where actors and women of loose morals, and men whose hands had reeked with human blood, made a mockery of Religion and of Reason itself, in the dim light of the great cathedral where for so many centuries the Almighty had been worshipped with solemn ritual and by many humble hearts.

To Robespierre this was blasphemy, which shocked him more than bloodshed. Strange as it may seem to those who have always regarded him as the very incarnation of the Terror, and therefore as a fiend in human shape, he was

a man of profound piety and reverence for the Divine Spirit of his belief. He had long ago abandoned the doctrines of Catholicism, and even of Christianity, but the Deism of Voltaire, the God in nature of Rousseau, was the basis of his whole philosophy, the foundation or governing principle of his ideal State. He did not believe that Reason was the one law of humanity. The will of the people could only be rightly guided by the illumination of the Divine Will, and morality, liberty, and love would be replaced by eternal anarchy unless the Supreme Being were acknowledged and worshipped. All through Robespierre's career he had shown respect for religion, and even for the ministers of the old religion. He was the one man, among the revolutionary extremists, who had not considered the overthrow of the Church as the essential condition of liberty. For this he had been accused as a 'priest' by men of his own party, yet with the great mass of the people, who still cherished some lingering sentiment for the faith of their fathers, especially with the women of France, who, like all women, had need of some spiritual guidance and emotion, this belief in a Providence or Divinity was the cause of at least some measure of his popularity and power. So Robespierre, withdrawing himself more and more from the Committee, with whose continual violence and bloodthirstiness he was no more in sympathy, exerted himself to establish a new religion in France. It is possible he believed that by this means he could so soften the people's hearts that the Reign of Terror would be abolished by sentiment more easily and more safely than by political authority. His colleagues in the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety secretly ridiculed this religious energy of their nominal leader. But, so long as they were not denied their guillotine, they would let Robiespierre do what he liked with his Deism.

So Robespierre, happier than he had been for many a day, organised his great Feast of the Supreme Being as a counter influence to the Feast of Reason. On May 7, 1794, he mounted the tribune of the Convention to read his report upon the relation between religious and moral laws and the principles of a Republic, and to pass a decree 'acknowledging' the existence of God. The modern world has laughed loudly over that decree. It contained the two famous clauses which follow :

'ART. I.—The French people recognise the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul.

'ART. II.—They acknowledge that the worship of the Supreme Being is one of the duties of Man.'

Certainly there is something for cynics to sneer at in thus legislating an act for the creation of the Almighty. And yet, in the orations pronounced before the Convention and afterwards before the people, Robespierre rose to a real greatness of eloquence, and his sentiment has something sublime in it. Something pathetic also, for there is a sense of tragedy in the speech of a man who had waded through years of bloodshed, who had, for the sake of a great ideal, committed many acts of violence and brought many men to death, and who saw anarchy and crime enthroned in the highest places, now groping his way back to the principles of love and reverence, and endeavouring to dominate the imagination of a modern people by primitive ideals and old-world sentiment. There was courage, also, and the fanaticism of the prophet in this challenge to the atheism of a nation who had broken down all the barriers of ancient faith only to find themselves in the barren wastes of unbelief. Never were Robespierre's words so absolutely sincere as when he made himself the high priest of a State religion, and it is this sincerity which forces one to overlook the stale

platitudes which come between his inspired and his impassioned phrases, and to pardon the political and sentimental philosophy by which he describes his conceptions of the Divine Being.

There is no space in this work to quote his oration, but the following phrases give the keynote, though not the harmony, of his eloquence:

'Atheism is aristocratic.'

'The idea of a Supreme Being, who watches over oppressed innocence and punishes triumphant vice, is altogether popular.'

'If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent Him.'

'The true priest of the Supreme Being is Nature; His temple, the universe; His religion, virtue; His fêtes, the joy of a great people assembled under His eyes to draw closer the sweet bonds of universal fraternity, and to present to Him the homage of pure and sensitive souls.'

Whatever we may find to admire in such a speech—and it was not an ignoble defence of natural religion—it must be confessed, even by Robespierre's apologists, that the ceremonies of that Feast of the Supreme Being were extremely ludicrous: to the modern mind, that is; though one must not forget that in the eighteenth century, in England as well as in France, the sense of humour was strangely deficient. The sight of Robespierre—the little man in blue coat, yellow breeches, white stockings, buckled shoes, and round felt hat with the tricolour ribbon—carrying an enormous bouquet of wheat-ears and other produce of the soil, and proceeding as high priest to the altar of Liberty in the Champ de Mars, there to put a torch to pasteboard figures representing atheism, tyranny, and vice, seems to us hugely comic and rather blasphemous. But it was accepted with the utmost

seriousness by the spectators, and the sight of the white-clad virgins, the fat white bullocks, the stout ladies symbolical of maternity, the elderly *bourgeois* gentlemen representing paternity and shedding carefully rehearsed tears at the sight of their offspring, occasioned none of that ribald merriment which accompanies our Lord Mayor's Show in London. It was, in fact, a huge success. Robespierre had never been so popular before, and from all parts of France came letters praising him as the apostle of the new religion, and the father of a new and happy State. It is true that meanwhile the guillotine was never idle, and that the number of heads falling daily into the basket was steadily increasing ; but that was a little inconsistency which many were prepared to ignore. There were many people, too, at that time, who saw more clearly than posterity has seen, that Robespierre was not really the Terror, that he stood above and apart from the men who fed the guillotine. Those men themselves knew now that Robespierre was not one of them. Billaud-Varennes knew it, and grumbled. 'I am beginning to be infernally bored with your Supreme Being,' he said. Collot d'Herbois knew it, and began to hint of punishment for those who failed in their duty. Carnot, the War Minister, knew it, and feared that if Robespierre checked the Terror his armies would lose recruits and their victories would be turned into defeat.

Robespierre, in those last months of his life, was curiously incautious. He had let Danton die, believing the time was not ripe for clemency ; but he now let the power of his position slip from his hands, though clemency was still in danger, and his ideals still unaccomplished. He withdrew himself almost entirely from the Committee, and on the rare occasions when he attended its sittings it was to stay there silent, with an abstracted and gloomy air, paying no attention to

the business in hand, or to the cold looks and angry mutterings of his colleagues. For the first time during his revolutionary career his pen lay idle, and he spent a great part of his days in wandering about the suburbs of Paris with a book of Rousseau under his arm, and a favourite dog at his heels. Now and again, at these times, he was seen walking hand in hand with Mademoiselle Duplay, the carpenter's daughter, to whom he was betrothed, but towards the end he seemed to shun her, and went always alone. His haunting thoughts, the disappointment of his great ideals, the remorse that was creeping into his heart, the dark terrors that closed round about him, would not admit of amiable society. He must be alone, with his own soul, and strive to find a way out of the thick and gloomy wood. He saw, with an astuteness that never deserted him, that in spite of his apparently supreme power in France, in spite of his being the symbol and figure-head of the Revolution, he was at the mercy of his colleagues in the Committee of Public Safety. It was they who had the real power, and he had only been their screen. He was growing tired: tired of fighting, tired of blood, very tired of the Terror. He had lost his subtlety, his mental vigour and his cautious audacity, and his contempt for crime. His bargain with the devil was at an end, and now he stood alone, drawing round him the rags and tatters of his early virtue. For some weeks he spoke a good deal at the Jacobin Club. There he still had faithful friends and followers who waited a sign from him. But he had no sign to give. He alternated between condemnations of violence and denunciations of moderation. He made veiled attacks against the Committee of Public Safety, and then upheld the justice of their acts. At last, in the Convention, he rallied a last effort of strength, and in an oration, which in its pure spirit of Rousseauism

showed the real and consistent principles of the man from first to last, made an appeal to the patriotism, the justice, and the humanity of the Assembly. He defended himself from the old accusation of aspiring to be Dictator, and from the newer accusation that to him was due the bloodshed of the Terror. 'My brief administration was limited to the issue of thirty writs which were to set at liberty some persecuted patriots and to arrest some enemies of the Revolution. Yet there has not perhaps been a single individual arrested who has not been told that I am the author of his misfortunes, and that he would be happy and free if I did not exist. It is enough for me to say that for the last six weeks the forces of calumny, and my inability to effect good or to arrest evil, have made me absolutely abandon my functions as a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and I swear that in doing so I have only consulted my reason and my country. Be that as it may, for six weeks my dictatorship has expired, for six weeks I have had no sort of influence over the Government. Has patriotism been better affected? Has faction been less audacious? Has the country been happier? I hope so.'

Then, in bolder words than he had yet used, though without accusing his former colleagues by name, he denounced the Terror, ending with the resignation of his life, if so it must be. 'As for me, whose existence seems to my enemies to be an obstacle to their odious projects, let them take it; willingly do I consent to the sacrifice if their frightful reign is still to continue!'

Billaud-Varennes and other defenders of the Terror threw off their mask of friendship towards their former leader and attacked him with violent eloquence. They demanded that he should not conceal his accusations behind vague words, but that he should name the men whom he

called his enemies. Shouts rang through the Assembly, and there was reiterated the cry of 'Name! Name! Name!' But Robespierre was silent, and presently, white to the lips, left the Assembly. He went on to the Jacobins, and there repeated all that he had previously said before the Convention. He moved his audience to tears, for he did not conceal from them that his death was near at hand. 'This that you have heard,' he said, in conclusion, 'is my testament and my will. . . . If I must drink the hemlock, I will drink it to the dregs!' A voice answered him from the excited crowd of Jacobins. It was the voice of David the painter, who had been consistent always to the principles and progress of the Revolution. 'I will drink it with you!' he cried.

'No, no; you shall live or we will all die with you!' shouted the others. But Robespierre repeated his words with the utmost solemnity. 'This is my last testament,' he said. 'I have seen to-day that the league of villains is so strong that I cannot hope to escape. I yield without regret! I leave to you my memory; it will be dear to you, and you will defend it!'

A scene of wild tumult followed these words, and the Jacobins vowed they would call the people to arms and crush the Convention. Henriot, the commandant of artillery, promised to bring his guns to bear upon the men of Terror. David, Duplay the father of his betrothed, Lebas, and other friends swore to protect Robespierre with their lives.

Robespierre himself was overpowered by this enthusiasm, and, raising his voice above the hubbub, signified his assent to a new insurrection. 'Very well!' he cried. 'Yes—separate the wicked from the weak! Free the Convention from the villains who oppress it! Restore it to liberty,

as you did on May 31 and on June 2! March, if necessary, and save the country!'

It is probable that, when the Jacobins separated to raise a new insurrection, Robespierre half believed that the people of Paris would not let him suffer. He had been their friend always, and they would perhaps rescue him from his enemies. With a courage that, in this moment of his supreme danger, almost gives the lie to his former cowardice, he again took his place in the Convention on the following day. Saint-Just, in loyal friendship to the man with whom he had sometimes quarrelled, whose timidity he had often scorned, but for whom he seems to have had a real love, stood by him and faced the hostile Assembly. With too much audacity, indeed, he sprang to the tribune and accused the enemies of Robespierre, and of himself, by name.

'Robespierre did not explain himself clearly enough yesterday,' he said. 'A plan was formed of usurping power by the death of several members of the Convention. Billaud-Varennes and Collot d'Herbois are guilty men. I do not content myself with naming them. I accuse them.'

Billaud-Varennes sprang to his feet and answered the challenge with ferocity. He announced the conspiracy of the Jacobins to massacre the Convention, the treason of Henriot in command of the artillery, the plot of Robespierre to become Dictator. One member after another rose to denounce Robespierre, and the chamber rang at last with the cries of 'Down with the tyrant! Arrest him! Arrest him!'

Robespierre vainly endeavoured to gain a hearing, but they would not listen to him. He moved upwards to the 'Mountain,' but they repulsed him with the names of Danton and Desmoulins, who once had sat there. At these names, and the ghosts they conjured up, Robespierre recoiled and

descended among the benches of the Girondins. But they also failed him, and as he sat down one of them cried, ' Wretch, that is Vergniaud's seat ! ' At that other name he sprang up again and walked away, his nerves all jangled by the noise about him and by ghost faces that taunted him in those moments of dreadful agony. In a kind of frenzy he sprang to the tribune, and stretching out his hand with a gesture of defiance cried ' President of Assassins, I demand to speak.' But they would not hear him. He was abandoned by all but Saint-Just and Couthon. In that Convention there were the friends of the Girondins, the friends of Danton and Desmoulins, who had been terrified into silence when those friends had fallen, and who had waited for this hour patiently. They would not forgo that hour. They would unite even with the Terrorists for the sake of this revenge against the one man who was the symbol of Terror. His boasted incorruptibility, his philosophic platitudes, his air of superiority, above all the long fear he had inspired in them, made his fall more steep and the triumph of his enemies more joyous. They shouted for his arrest, and the President passed the dread words. Saint-Just and Couthon and Robespierre's younger brother (an insignificant and shadowy character in the Revolution) were included in the arrest. They were immediately taken to different prisons: Robespierre to the Luxembourg, Saint-Just to La Force, Couthon to La Bourbe, and the younger Robespierre to St. Lazare.

Meanwhile the Jacobins had been endeavouring to engineer the insurrection. Henriot, of the artillery, had obtained a stock of Dutch courage by drugging himself with drink, and had dragged his guns to the Hôtel de Ville. Some of the sections had risen, and the streets were crowded with armed men. They marched upon the prisons and released the four men from the guards, who were bewildered at this

sudden turn of fate, and were considerably alarmed by having the great Robespierre in their charge. In triumph they were borne to the Hôtel de Ville, and clamorous men surrounded Robespierre with a paper in which they declared him Dictator and summoned the people to rise and crush the men of Terror. They wanted his signature to this document, his authority for the insurrection. But Robespierre refused. Let the insurrection take place, but not by his command. Again, as throughout his career, he drew back from taking any direct share in a revolt against the Government. The people must act without him, and whatever they achieved he would accept. But they must not ask him to be their leader! Above all, they must not ask him to assume the Dictatorship after all his denials of such an ambition. It has been suggested that this was another proof of his cowardice and subtlety; that he hoped, by refusing to give his written consent to insurrection, he would regain the favour of the National Convention if the people failed. But it seems more likely that in these last hours of his life he was resolved to give himself passively into the hands of Fate. For six weeks he had abandoned political intrigue for the worship of the Supreme Being, and now death did not seem so terrible, if come it must. Rather it must have seemed to him a grateful release from a life which was rendered valueless by the crimes of those whom he had tried to lead, and by the anarchy of a people he had struggled to save. So he resigned himself to Fate, and after a short, sharp struggle with his conscience, threw down the pen with which he had traced the first three letters of his name, and refused finally to sign.

Couthon turned away with a groan.

'Then there is nothing for us but death.'

'You have said it,' was Robespierre's quiet answer.

Saint-Just, rebelling for a moment from his friendship, reproached him with passionate eyes.

'It is you who sacrifice us.'

Out in the streets there was tumult and the wildest disorder. Drunken Henriot was jeered at by his own men, at whom he swore in a blind rage, and with shouts of '*Vive la Convention!*' they turned their guns towards the Hôtel de Ville.

The Convention are not passive in this crisis. They call out troops, relying upon their fidelity, and the advance guards, consisting of twenty-five sappers and some grenadiers, break down the doors of the Hôtel de Ville and tramp up the grand staircase. In a room above, the Salle d'Égalité, the doomed men are waiting silently, listening with strained ears to the noise. Lebas hands a pistol to Robespierre, signing to him to take his own life. But Robespierre refuses, upon which, as the crashing of the doors below grows louder, and the jingling of the soldiers' accoutrements is plainly heard, Lebas turns the pistol to his own heart, and falls dead upon the floor. Robespierre the younger leaps out of the window, breaking a leg, and lying in the courtyard groaning. Henriot, the drunkard, is met by one of his fellow-conspirators as he comes lurching along the corridor, and before his stupid wits have time to put him on his guard he is seized and hurled over the balcony. 'Get out, you vile drunkard,' cries his enraged assailant. 'You are not worthy of a scaffold.'

In a few moments a body of armed men break into the room where Robespierre sits like a white ghost at the table, and where handsome young Saint-Just stands, proudly, by his side.

'Down with the tyrant!'

The soldiers shout the words as they push each other

Dessiné par L' Monnet

LE IX THERMIDOR An II.

through the doorway. One of them, named Meda, draws his pistol, and with a sanguinary impulse fires straight at Robespierre's head. The bullet shatters the unhappy man's jaw, and with a fearful groan he falls forward with blood oozing upon the paper which he had refused to sign. They thought him dead at first, but he is only mangled. He is placed on a litter, and with the other prisoners carried by the soldiers to the Tuileries, where, in the early dawn, the Convention is still sitting. There, laid out in a little anteroom, Robespierre, already half dead, is visited by his enemies and by those who had formerly been his most fulsome friends. They jeer at him and taunt him with cruel witticisms. Not Robespierre is the coward now. At length, after many hours of torture, the prisoners are taken to the Committee of General Safety and questioned. It is a vain formality, for Robespierre at least. His mangled jaw has made him dumb, and only his eyes express unutterable things. The prisoners, with the corpse of Lebas, the suicide, among them, spend the night in the Conciergerie. Then they are taken to the Revolutionary Tribunal, where Fouquier-Tinville sits with lowered eyes that never look once upon the men whose death he is called upon to pronounce. That death is slow in coming. There is now the journey through the streets, where every jolt of the tumbrils extracts a groan from Robespierre, Henriot, Couthon, and the younger Robespierre, who have all been maimed. The streets are densely packed, but very silent. Here and there some well-dressed men and women in a window clap their hands and cry 'Death! Death!' in a frenzied kind of joy. They are the relatives of those who have perished in the Terror, and to them Robespierre's downfall seems a Divine vengeance. But the mob, the men and women who had made the Revolution, who for five years had taken

their share in all those insurrections which begin or end each chapter of the Revolution, these were silent and bewildered. To them Robespierre had been a watchword, almost a religion, and that he should be going to his death is a mystery beyond their understanding. As Robespierre passed the house of the Duplays, where, behind closed blinds, four good and gentle women wept the only tears that would fall for him in France, he turned his head aside, with a groan, and shut his eyes. It was the bitterest moment of his martyrdom. All his foiled ambitions mocked at him. Oh that he could sit, an unknown man, in that little room above the carpenter's shed, with Éléonore's hand in his! As at last he staggered on to the scaffold, the executioner brutally tore off the bandage which had bound up his jaw. It hung downwards, and a frightful cry of agony came from him. It was the last sound that came from his living throat. In a moment the guillotine was in motion, and the work was done. One after another his companions went to the knife, none of them speaking a word. Saint-Just, handsome and heroic, bore himself with a proud and arrogant disdain of death. It is said that men and women embraced each other with tears around the scaffold, dancing and doing wild things for joy that Robespierre was no more. And yet but a few months had passed since he had been hailed from all parts of the Republic as the Messiah of the Revolution and the glory of France!

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